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**WOMEN'S NETWORKS: THEIR PARTICIPATION IN
AND INFLUENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA**

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

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School of Social Science
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September 2001

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Susan Barber,
September 2001

WOMEN'S NETWORKS: THEIR PARTICIPATION IN AND INFLUENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

ABSTRACT

Through a selective review of the literature on sustainable development, this thesis identifies the concepts of networking, participation and redistribution as crucial to the philosophy and politics of sustainable development. Feminist perspectives on these concepts are used as analytical tools in a study of women's networks and their participation in, and influence on, the sustainable development agenda and the implementation of Agenda 21 (UN, 1992) in the 1990s.

It is argued that the participation of women's networks in developing the sustainability agenda, although crucial to the implementation of Agenda 21, was limited. The dynamics between political actors resulting from international agreements, such as Agenda 21, and the influence of women's networks on associated processes and outcomes are currently under researched in the literature. This is explored in the thesis. It is suggested that the principles of associative democracy, group representation and "user-involvement" could be synthesized and employed to strengthen democratic representation in the political arena relating to the sustainability agenda. It is further suggested that these principles could serve as a model for similar exercises in the future.

The methodology used is qualitative. An empirical study involving interviews and participant observation of women's networks is presented. So too is a critical review of the "grey" literature on the influence of women's networks on Agenda 21 and the scholarly literature on the implementation of local Agenda 21 (LA21). The need for LA21 consultations to take account of the views of women's networks, and for new forms of democratic representation to be developed is illustrated.

GLOSSARY

Agenda 21 is a United Nations, inter-governmental agreement (UN, 1992). Signed by 127 governmental representatives at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

The **Brundtland Commission** was headed by Gro-Harlem Brundtland, former Swedish Prime Minister. The commission was instigated by the United Nations. It brought together the findings of inter-sectoral and international hearings on sustainable development. These were written up and published as Our Common Future (WCED, 1987). This laid the basis for the preparatory committee meetings prior to UNCED and formed the basis for Agenda 21 (UN, 1992).

It was agreed to set up the UN CSD, (United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development) at UNCED, to oversee the international reporting on progress towards sustainability and to act as a focal point for the major actors identified in Agenda 21. Apart from governments and international organisations, nine major groups were identified as crucial to the process, and as able to represent “civil society” namely: women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organisations, workers and trade unions, local authorities, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers. Each group is the topic of the chapters that make up section 3 of Agenda 21 (UN, 1992).

The **Gender 21 UNED-UK Roundtable on Women and Sustainable Development** attracted participants from private and public sector organisations. Their collective experience was drawn upon and a report based on it (UNED-UK, 1997a) was presented to the UK government, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development; the United Nations coordinator of major group responses to Agenda 21 among other lobby targets in the Spring of 1997.

The term the **Gender 21 UNED-UK network** is used throughout this thesis to refer to all those organisations and networks that participated directly in or were associated with the Roundtable, and which the research project drew on.

Local initiatives, including consultations, programmes, partnerships and projects relating to Agenda 21 are collectively referred to as **LA21**. This is an abbreviation for ‘Local Agenda 21’.

The **UNA** or United Nations Association, based in London, is a membership organisation for organisations and individuals having an interest in the work of the United Nations.

UNED-UK is the Environment and Development Committee of the United Nations Association. It coordinated the Round Table on Women and Sustainable Development (among others defined by sector or issue), prior to the United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly, called to review the first five years of progress towards sustainable development and the implementation of Agenda 21.

UNCED or the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, otherwise known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. This was the largest conference that the United Nations had ever held. Some 116 heads of state, 172 states, 8,000 delegates, 9,000 members of the press and 3,000 accredited representatives of non-governmental organisations attended (Pezzoli, K., 1997:552 quoting Robinson, 1993:xiii). Conventions on Bio-diversity and Climate Change were signed. Three non-binding, but nevertheless “landmark” documents were adopted by consensus: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the Statement of Principles on Forests (ibid.)

The 1997 United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly, **UNGASS** was called to review progress after the UNCED. It is customary United Nations practice to hold such reviews 10 years after a landmark Conference. UNGASS (1997) was a “special” session, held to provide an interim account of progress mid-point between 1992 and 2002.

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1. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE CONTEXT

This chapter is concerned with setting the context of the study in the light of two key documents Our Common Future (WCED, 1987), and Agenda 21 (UN, 1992).

Subsequent chapters can be understood in relation to these.

KEY DOCUMENTS: AGENDA 21 AND OUR COMMON FUTURE

Our Common Future can be considered a key document in the following senses: it was commissioned by the United Nations; it envisaged that during the 21st century an international consensus should be built that would focus on the need to redefine and reorient “progress”; and, it informed the governmental and non-governmental consultative processes that occurred after its publication in 1987 and prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) that took place in 1992. It therefore laid an important basis for Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 is a key document in this study because it set out agreements to restructure national and international policies to bring about sustainable development. 127 governmental representatives attended UNCED and signed Agenda 21. It laid the basis for the reform of national and international policy, and for environmental, social and economic change.

Agenda 21 uses a definition of sustainable development put forward in Our Common Future. It is: “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (WCED, 1987, p43). Although this is the best-known definition, and, nearly ten years after its publication, it continued to be put forward as the “key statement of sustainable development” (Kirby, O’Keefe and Timberlake, 1995 p1), it is limited in what it tells us about this multi-faceted and contested concept¹.

¹ There are many definitions of sustainable development. Pezzy, in his economic analysis for the World Bank listed over 100 (1992). Pezzoli’s trans-disciplinary overview identified ten types of literature concerned with sustainable development, each of which had several sub-categories (1997). Hombergh

Our Common Future and Agenda 21 made a case for a new consensus to be built on the nature of what should count as “progress” and how to achieve it. Why? As Our Common Future put it, “... [the world faces three interlinked crises]...an environmental crisis, a development crisis, an energy crisis. They are all one.” (WCED 1987, p4).

Our Common Future acknowledged that the dominant development paradigm based on political and economic liberalism, was no longer to be considered tenable. Poverty had not been eradicated, environmental degradation had occurred and some natural goods had been used, possibly to the point of exhaustion.

Political and economic liberalism were not, however, to be totally rejected. Rather, substantial reforms were needed to change commercial and social behaviour towards the environment, and towards poor and marginalised people. Social, economic and attitudinal change was also envisaged. Government was to play a major role in encouraging and supporting this.

The role and scope of Agenda 21 can be briefly stated as follows. Building on Our Common Future it developed the case for building international agreement for a “common future”. Whilst it is not, in United Nations terms, a binding document in the sense that a Covenant or a Declaration is, it is an agreement that could provide a basis for a Declaration or Covenant in the future. Agenda 21 recommended policy change. However, national sovereignty remained paramount. There were clear recommendations on the necessary processes to be utilised in the development of strategic plans and national governments were to act so as to support and facilitate change to reflect the priorities of Agenda 21.

(1993, p45), in her review of the literature on women, environment and development (WED) pointed to the ideological oppositions that remain evident under the “common flag” of sustainable development.

Agenda 21 provided a basis for a global programme of action (UN, 1992, p13-15). It aimed to reorient development along the lines of recommendations for action and implementation laid out in it, and in the principles that are the subject of the Rio declaration on environment and development (UN, 1992). The 'Programme of Action' is presented in four sections, each having a number of chapters. The first section of it is entitled 'Social and Economic dimensions'. The second 'Conservation and management of resources for Development'. The third section is entitled 'Strengthening of Major Groups' and the fourth, 'Means of Implementation'. Whilst every chapter does not conform to exactly the same format, each one contains sub-sections covering the particular "objectives", "activities" and "means of implementation" agreed by signatory states. Most chapters contain a mixture of recommendations for governments and for non-governmental actors. Each chapter lays-out a number of actions that governments "should" undertake.

Our Common Future and Agenda 21 envisaged that more emphasis should be placed upon active citizenship, empowerment of disadvantaged groups in society, holistic and integrated public policy making, and evaluation. In this way political action at international, national and local levels, would be strengthened, in part, by "major group" representation becoming better developed (Agenda 21 section 3). Agenda 21 envisaged that environmental considerations would be taken into account by governments in their budgetary planning and analysis, and that "lay-opinion" and "experiential knowledge" based on input by "major" and/or "disadvantaged" groups would play a significant part in informing public policy alongside "scientific knowledge".

The status of Agenda 21 consultations can be understood as formal, in the sense that national and local government were to facilitate them and elected representatives could be involved. They could be understood as less than formal, in the sense that they were not to be carried out solely through the mechanism of elected representatives but required the involvement of local citizens and major groups directly. By 1996, it was

clear that they had been linked to policy-making processes that existed among networks of civil servants and governmental officers (Rydin, 1996).

AGENDA 21 AND WOMEN

This thesis is concerned with the elements of Agenda 21 that set out an “agenda” relating to women, to poverty experienced by them, and with how they participated in the post-UNCED consultations designed to inform national and local strategies. At several points in its text, Agenda 21 refers to women’s disadvantaged status, the need to “empower” them, and the need for greater consultation with and participation of women in processes designed to bring change about. Among the key recommendations of Agenda 21 were that governments should include women’s perspectives in public policy, that women’s representation in policy-making arenas should be facilitated and that their numbers among decision-makers should be increased (UN, 1992, p220-223). It was stated that local strategies based on socially inclusive consultations would be developed by 1996. In addition, poverty would be tackled through the development and/or revision of national and international anti-poverty strategies designed with the input of those they were meant to empower. The need to assist the most disadvantaged groups, and in particular women, was emphasised (UN, 1992, p27-31). In addition to including women’s perspectives in public policy, increasing women’s representation in policy-making arenas and increasing the numbers of women as decision-makers, signatories to Agenda 21 agreed the following. It would be necessary to support changed familial and employment practices to promote the “equal sharing” of household tasks by women and men, and to “support and strengthen” equal employment opportunities and equitable remuneration (UN, 1992, p221). Recommendations were made as to how these aims could be facilitated (UN, 1992, p220-223). Each recommendation can be seen as partly originating in perspectives on the nature of the crises offered by social movements, the most important of which, for the purposes of this study, were feminist or inspired by feminism. The sustainability agenda is not just a feminist one. However, this thesis argues that it requires the advocacy of feminism as part of a holistic package of social, political, environmental and economic reform.

THE CONCEPTS OF PARTICIPATION AND REDISTRIBUTION

The concepts of participation and redistribution are central to understanding how Agenda 21 was to have been implemented. As concepts, they helped to structure the study which forms the thesis in order to move forward our understanding of what would be required if sustainable development strategies were to meet the needs of women. They are discussed again in chapter three where feminist perspectives and some non-feminist perspectives are examined. This section helps to set the theoretical context for the study, in relation to Our Common Future and Agenda 21.

Participation

Chapter 24 of Agenda 21 'Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development' is to be found in its Section 3, which is entitled 'Strengthening the role of major groups'. The term 'major group' is not defined. However, there are chapters on women, children and youth, indigenous people and their communities, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, workers and their trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological community and farmers, and it is these groups that are referred to as "major". The preamble to Section 3 says: "Any policies, definitions or rules affecting access to and participation by non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations institutions or agencies associated with the implementation of Agenda 21 must apply equally to all major groups." (UN, 1992, p219). In addition it says that the "genuine involvement of all social groups..." is "critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms agreed to by Governments in all programme areas of Agenda 21..." (ibid.). It called for socially inclusive consultations and it stated that a significant cause of unsustainable practices could be found in the exclusion of significant groups of people whose interests, experiences and expertise were not reflected in and/or represented by development institutions (op. cit. passim and especially Section 3). What counts as "development institutions" is not clarified. This thesis takes them as including formal democratic and economic institutions and informal ones that structure social and economic organisation.

The position that is argued in subsequent chapters is that whilst “women” can be seen as a major group, with many shared or common interests, they are not a homogeneous one. For Agenda 21 to work well therefore it would be crucial that processes involving representation and accountability through a major group structure were developed. It is argued that women form a distinctive group within other major groups and it is recognised that women form a disproportionate percentage of disadvantaged groups and among those who are socially excluded and who can be considered as “poor”.

Redistribution

Both Our Common Future and Agenda 21 placed a priority on meeting the needs of the world’s poor and on the alleviation of poverty to be underwritten by a general redistribution of wealth. Among the worlds poor and socially excluded, women are disproportionately represented². This study mobilises the concept of redistribution to develop our understanding of the relationship between the issues prioritised by women in the post-UNCED era, and the use of Agenda 21 as a political leverage point.

Agenda 21 holds that women are to be acknowledged and strengthened as a major group. This means that in the political arena they must contribute to strategy, play key roles as decision makers, and provide a focus for research, especially research that helps to identify “structural linkages between gender environment and development” (UN, 1992, p222). Chapter three on combating poverty implicitly argues in favour of a redistribution of power in favour of the poor. It acknowledges that women need to be “empowered” to “participate in decision making” and that the evaluation of programmes and activities (including anti poverty programmes) “... should be gender specific, since women are a particularly disadvantaged group” (UN, 1992, p28-29).

² In addition to reports and agreements such as those published by WCED, (1987), or UN (1992), subsequent United Nations agreements also make this point and consolidate recommendations as to the policy initiatives required to improve women’s status, and promote greater equality between them and men. Eg., UNDP, (1993); UN, (1995); UNDP, (1995).

Agenda 21 did not define poverty. A key passage in a chapter of it entitled 'Combating Poverty' in Agenda 21 (UN, 1992, p27) is:

"A specific anti-poverty strategy is ... one of the basic conditions for ensuring sustainable development. An effective strategy for tackling the problems of poverty, development and environment simultaneously should begin by focussing on resources, production and people and should cover demographic issues, enhanced health care and education, the rights of women and local communities and a democratic participation process in association with improved governance."

Although there was much said about the need to eradicate poverty, this was apparently to be facilitated by economic growth. However economic growth, using existing models, causes poverty as well as wealth generation (MacGregor, 1998(b); 1999).

The position argued in this thesis is that without a redistribution of wealth and power, women and their representatives are kept at an unfair disadvantage compared to their male counterparts and their potential role as a major group is not adequately developed. In addition, the redistributive agenda is a crucial one because, only if it is followed through, will the participation requirements of Agenda 21 be likely to come into full operation.

THE NATIONAL-LOCAL CONTEXT

Agenda 21 was not a "blue-print" but rather a set of guidelines to be developed as a result of national and local planning. It implied a "rolling process of social learning composed of experimentation and piloting" (Christie, 2000). Progress towards these aims was to be scrutinised and regularly reviewed, at the international level³.

Recommendations put forward in Agenda 21 were used as leverage points by women's networks in the UK in their lobbying work and in their critique of progress towards sustainable development in the period 1992-97 (UNED-UK, 1997a). It is to these networks that we shall return again in chapter six, where the results of an empirical study are presented.

³ The UN Commission on Sustainable Development was set up in 1992 as a result of the UNCED agreements, to oversee this process.

Consultations took place in the UK in the context of changes in the relationship between central and local government. Although Agenda 21 pointed to the need for participation, that had been interpreted by scholars as participatory democracy (Achterberg, 1996; Agyeman and Evans, 1995; Baker, Kousis, Richardson, and Young, 1996(b); Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 1996a; 1996b), policy initiatives in the UK in the 1980s and 1990s were characterised by managerialist policy-making imperatives. These too advocated greater participation but in the management of services, notably the education service, and of users, notably in community care. Consultation processes that served the ideological functions of managerialism had been identified in relation to policy reform that removed accountability from individual voters (Cutler and Waine, 1997).

According to Cutler and Waine the claim of managerialism, namely to take account of stakeholder interests and measure performance, was a partial one. Informed by neo-liberalism, managerialism is opposed to redistributive social and economic policies and to progressive taxation. It assumes that management information is transparent, that the criteria for performance measured are unproblematic, and that the measures create accountability between service providers and users. Cutler and Waine argued that, on the contrary, its distributional implications are that marginalised groups, such as women, especially those who carry out caring functions, would continue to have little or no influence on policy decisions. They argued that it is essentially undemocratic in the formal sense, as power is taken from locally elected representatives and more power is centralised, and/or displaced on providers other than the public sector (private sector, and carers). Some costs are also displaced on these providers. In this way, managerialism could undermine necessary political debate on central, distributional issues.

There was both ambiguity about the worth of managerialist consultations, and hope that services that better met the needs of users might emerge from them (Clarke and Newman, 1997). According to Clarke and Newman, managerialism may have

unintended consequences, such that the above tendencies would be resisted, with the result that networking among social movements and among public sector managers occurred in order to stop the fragmentation of welfare state and to revitalise democracy.

In terms of the UK, was this then the context into which Agenda 21 would fit? If not, how might participatory consultations be engineered so as to deliver those aspects of Agenda 21 outlined above? Some commentators on the UNCED process argued that it was a triumph for managerialism, and for those who wished to co-opt environmental ideas and to use these in rhetoric, linked to sustainable development (Chatterjee and Finger, 1994). The implication of this is that environmentalists coopted by the UNCED process and feminists who advocated cultural and group organisation, without a strong role for representative democracy, may unwittingly mistake managerialism for representative decentralisation.

CONCLUSION

Much would depend upon how government interpreted Agenda 21. This, in turn, would set the boundary within which social movements and political activists were able to operate in the Agenda 21 consultative arena. What could be learnt from the consultations to develop local strategies about the nature of “participation” and “democracy” in the 1990s? How much “redistribution” of power and wealth would be supported and encouraged? Given the non-binding status of Agenda 21, why did government and activists not ‘close the book’ on it? It has been considered by some as at best lacking in substance and as at worse, a waste of time and resources (Sachs, 1993; Chatterjee and Finger, 1994). Yet, an enormous amount of resources were put into both governmental and non-governmental activities in the UK during the 1990s as a result of it. Did this amount to an experiment in changing some of the bases of development, and how, if at all, did it relate to democracy? These questions are taken up again in subsequent chapters.

2. METHODOLOGY

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study considers how feminist inspired actors and theorists influenced Agenda 21 and how it was implemented in the UK in the 1990s. An analysis is made of the extent to which those aspects of Agenda 21 that called for the participation of women and their representatives were effectively implemented, especially through the processes associated with local Agenda 21 (LA21)⁴. A case-study is presented of a network of organisations, known as the UNED-UK Gender 21 network. Its constituents were involved in campaigns and lobbies that held the potential for women to influence local and national strategies for sustainable development. These networks were involved in a consultative lobby that is the focus of the field-work carried out in 1996-97. They were part of an important cross sectoral⁵ exercise mounted to assess progress and report to a high level inter-governmental special session of the United Nations General Assembly, (UNGASS), that was held in New York in June 1997. The findings of the study are timely because lessons learnt from it are highly relevant to the next major international review to be held in 2002.

The purposes of the overall study underpinning the thesis were to:

- (a) Explore how far feminist action influenced the meanings and the agenda of sustainable development in the period 1990-1997;
- (b) Develop an understanding of the extent to which women had found a space to network and to shape the Agenda 21 agenda through Gender 21 within what was a hostile political environment;
- (c) Consider how far the concepts of networking, participation and redistribution are useful in exploring the dynamics between feminism, women's networks and cross

⁴ LA21 is the term by which the process of moving the sustainable development agenda forward locally is known. LA21 processes included consultations with local populations to develop local strategies, and the methods by which the integration of social, economic and environmental policy development and analyses were carried forward. Other relevant processes for the purpose of this thesis include the actions that were to be taken by governments in support of women, disadvantaged groups and in support of changed gender and power relationships called for in Agenda 21.

⁵ The term cross-sectoral is used here to indicate that representatives of public, private and voluntary sectors were represented in consultative fora.

sectoral sustainable development communities involved in policy making and moving Agenda 21 forward.

This was achieved by asking the following questions:

- 1) To what extent did women's organisations participate in LA21 consultations prior to the publication of national and local strategies for sustainable development and with what effect?
- 2) Was LA21 used as a vehicle for social inclusion and in particular was it used to facilitate women's representation?
- 3) How did women's organisations participating in the UNED-UK Gender 21 Round Table network use opportunities to participate in consultations prior to the publication of national and local strategies, and what power did they have to contribute to them?

DESIGN

The study was designed around the following: (1) Agenda 21, (2) the women's lobbies that helped to shape Agenda 21, (3) early commentaries on the process of local Agenda 21 (LA21) in the UK and (4) an empirical study of a women's network in the UK. These elements of the research were chosen both on the basis of theoretical interest and because they were considered to be of likely interest to activist groups and those involved in policy making relating to Agenda 21. The methodology builds on that used by the research community interested in "user involvement" (Barnes, M., and Wistow G., 1992 a; 1992b; Barnes, M., 1999; Beresford, 1992).

The choice of empirical study allowed access to feminist activists in evaluative arenas associated with Agenda 21. This involved participant, action-oriented observation. The literature reviews took in (a) a critical review of selected conceptual and empirical literature relating to sustainable development and (b) the implementation of local Agenda 21 (LA21). In addition, a critical analysis of national sustainable development strategy documents is made focusing on what was said about women and about the need for revised anti- poverty measures.

The research was structured to allow for what Creswell, (1998, p87, citing Stake, 1995) called a “descriptive, issue-oriented case study”. Issues relating to the feminist agenda and sustainable development were identified through a literature review and these help one to understand, and to put into context, the issues arising from the study. The study was also structured to allow for what Creswell (1998, p62 and Stake, 1994) have called the instrumental and the intrinsic aims of the case to be played out. Its instrumental aim was to provide an insight into how far feminism influenced the sustainability agenda. Its intrinsic aim was to examine unique “groups”, “occasions” and “issues” of which there had been no research coverage before.

The empirical study

The study presented in chapter six was designed to draw directly on observations of and interviews with those who had experience of (a) representing women, (b) advocating public policy reform drawing on the experience of disadvantaged women (eg., single parent women, pensioners, low paid), and (c) networking among groups concerned with the social, environmental and economic elements of sustainable development.

I observed a Round Table on women and sustainable development, called by the Environment and Development Committee (UNED-UK) of the United Nations Association. This enabled me to draw on the experience of networks that included membership organisations, self-advocacy groups, and campaigning organisations on environmental and social policy issues as they affected women. It enabled access to individuals who were “information-rich” (Creswell, 1998, p119). The time period for carrying out the empirical research was determined by the life-span of the Round Table, namely July 1996 – June 1997. The case offered the opportunity to better understand the influence of feminist views in the sustainability arena, and how women’s organisations attempted to bring feminist perspectives back to the political stage five years after the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

The approach taken to the research was similar to that of Barnes and Wistow (1992a; 1992b), Barnes (1999) and Beresford (1992). Their studies focused mainly on user involvement in service delivery. My research focused on group involvement in the planning and evaluation of local, national and international strategies for sustainable development. Where user-involvement studies were useful to this one was in their illumination of how consultations called for by government could be used, or cast aside, when it came to “decision-making” relating to services and to access to the material resources necessary to the exercise of citizenship rights. The 1999 study by Barnes showed that government distanced itself from user involvement when participants in user groups were seen as “self-interested pressure groups” (p73). However, what constituted a “self-interested pressure group” or an “atypical” one (op.cit. p79) appeared to depend upon what amounted to the uninformed opinion of the local government officer overseeing user involvement. Barnes made a distinction between self-interested pressure groups (defined by her as those who traditionally had considerable power to lobby, to attain their goals and to maintain or increase their already considerable power) and user, or social movement organisations. The latter were characterised by her as belonging to and seeking to better represent views of movements, as advocates and as practising self-help and self-organisation. They were also characterised by the fact that they often formed in order to draw attention to their exclusion from citizenship. My informants came from groups that fall into the latter category. Barnes’s research showed that welfare professionals had inadequately understood the experience of disabled people. Among her conclusions were that consultations that took place under the banner of “user involvement” could be seen in the following light. They provided spaces for those who had previously been excluded from giving their views on public policies that affected them, and some gains were made. They provided a focus for social movement users wishing to draw attention to their exclusion from citizenship and stimulated debate about the nature of what would need to happen to stop this. However, some officials were able to claim that “interest-groups”, rather than legitimate “users” were unrepresentative of “the public”. Finally, user involvement consultations were to be seen in the light of legitimating public

policy reform, such as that of the NHS and Community Care Act, 1990, in the name of better meeting users needs.

The questions arose, at the beginning of my study, how might LA21 consultations be used? Would they be cast aside? Who would decide which “identities” and “interests” were to prevail in LA21 and in other decision-making fora connected to Agenda 21? The concept of participation is mobilised in the study both as an analytic tool and to aid our understanding of the dynamics between theory and action. It is also used as a method of research. It has the potential to help us to consider how women could be empowered to play key roles, and how they could best be represented as a group.

Literature and documentary review

Chapters three and four offer a critical and selective reading of literature about: (a) the key concepts of participation, redistribution and networking; (b) women involved in the international arena of cross-sectoral networking focused on sustainable development. Chapter five shows the main preoccupations of the national strategy for sustainable development, and the key principles underlying it (DoE, 1994), and it offers a particular interpretation of the LA21 literature (including reports of research projects and of “grey literature” about the implementation of LA21 in the UK). Chapter seven reflects on the principles informing the second national strategy (DETR, 1999) and what it has to say of relevance to this study.

METHODS

The empirical study

In December 1995, I approached UNED-UK to study a Round Table on Women and Sustainable Development that was to be called in order to present the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD) with an evaluative report on the progress towards the implementation of Agenda 21 between 1992 and 1997. Having agreed to co-operate with UNED-UK, in return for helping to co-ordinate the proceedings of the Round Table, the following plan was set in motion. I carried out participant observation and interviews under the umbrella structure provided by the

Round Table. I observed eight meetings between July 1996 and April 1997. Between 15 and 38 participants attended meetings. The mailing list settled at 50. My observations were of (a) each of the Round Table meetings, (b) input to them by correspondence and, at times over the telephone, (c) documents produced, (d) conferences, seminars and meetings organised by participants in the Round Table, or attended by them. Three working groups developed. Members of the groups had experience of, and/or expertise in (a) awareness raising about women and Agenda 21; (b) poverty experienced by women in the UK; (c) critiques of planning and urban design processes by women. The aim was to pool expertise and experience and to use this to raise awareness about women's perspectives on how its implementation could be enhanced.

Selection of informants

I accessed the UNA membership database to select what Creswell (1998, p62) refers to as a purposeful sample. The membership database was already coded to enable members to be selected by their nominated special interests. Members with an interest in women's issues, environment and poverty were selected and they were later invited by UNED to participate in the Round Table. LA21 Officers⁶, based within local authorities in England and Wales were also invited to participate in the Round Table as were Women's Officers of local authorities⁷. By drawing in informants selected in this way, it was envisaged that different perspectives would be brought to bear on the question of how best to evaluate progress on the implementation of Agenda 21.

Those invited to participate in my research project included all who participated in the Round Table. All of those who attended the first Round Table meeting were asked and agreed to being observed and to my using my observations for the purposes of academic research. Participants who joined subsequently were similarly asked and agreed. A diary was kept which recorded the proceedings of each meeting. After each one, an analysis was made in which all references to networking, participation and

⁶ A list of names and addresses was supplied by the London Ecology Centre (LEC). LEC kept a central record of LA21 contacts and acted as an information and resource centre.

⁷ Names and addresses were supplied by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

redistribution were extracted and noted in order to build a picture of informants experience of and views about these issues. Informants provided written information about relevant activities of their organisations. Some agreed to being interviewed. In addition, some participants recommended associates from whom the researcher then gathered documentary information and/or interviewed. A list of those who participated in the research project, either by being observed in Round Table meetings or in interviews is given at the end of this thesis as Appendix 1.

The questions asked of informants arose from my observations of four Round Table meetings, which took place between July and December 1996. Interviewees were selected on the basis of their experience of cross-sectoral consultations and consciousness-raising prior to and since UNCED. Six interviews were tape-recorded. One was carried out over the telephone and noted down in long-hand. Appendix 3 reproduces the interview schedule. Specific questions from the interview schedule were asked of a further 18 informants during, or soon after Round Table meetings. The answers were recorded in some depth and written into a diary. The Round Table meetings provided repeated opportunities to ask questions and clarify points.

Characteristics of informants

Informants were knowledgeable about Agenda 21 and its origins and most were actively engaged in campaigns and/or consultations designed to raise awareness about it⁸. Twenty-nine non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were represented. Three participants held positions within universities or research institutes. Four informants were employed by local authorities. A common factor shared by most informants was that they were actively involved in more than one women's organisation or network. Several worked for organisations or networks, the members and groups of which participated in and campaigned to raise awareness about LA21 consultations. Table 1.1 gives an indication of organisational affiliation.

⁸ Where participants were not engaged in LA21 campaigns directly, they were advocates for women's organisations and networks, on social, economic and environmental issues.

All bar 2 informants were women and they were attached to non-governmental networks, organisations involved in advocacy and campaigning work relating to social, environmental, development and economic policy, women's organisations, local authorities and academe. There were 26 regular participants. Some of them represented or were members of more than one organisation having an interest in Agenda 21. For example, some public sector employees who took part were also members of women's networks or organisations. Some representatives of women's organisations were also involved in local Agenda 21 (LA21) campaigns and consultations. Participants completed a questionnaire to show their position within or relationship to the organisation(s) they represented, the kind of organisation(s) represented, and current projects or experience that were relevant to sustainable development⁹. Responses indicated the extent of the network and information that could potentially be drawn on by the project. Thirty-three questionnaires were completed, 31 by women and two by men.

Organisation Type	Number represented by the study Project
Women's NGO	8
Women's Network	6
Church or religious network of women	3
NGO or network or Party (women's group or project)	4
Environmental/ecological campaigning organisation (not having specific women's project or group)	3
Local Authority	4
Local Agenda 21 Group ¹⁰	7
Universities and research organisations	3

Table 1.1 The organisational affiliation of participants¹¹ in the project. N.B. Some individuals were affiliated to more than one organisation or network.

The views of the 24 informants questioned arose from (1) the experience of events that led to UNCED, (2) experience since UNCED. Informants with different experience were asked particular questions. Twelve were asked questions about the evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21 and about their own organisational constituencies

⁹ Appendix 3 reproduces the questionnaire referred to here.

¹⁰ Six local groups were represented directly in the project. The seventh group was the National, Local Agenda 21 Steering Group. NGOs and networks represented in the project had significant participation in LA21 consultations through local groups and members.

¹¹ Of the 26 participants in the Round Table, 24 were informants (interviewed or questioned during participant observation).

and affiliations. Nine were asked about the experience of giving information to government officials in “briefing” meetings prior to UNGASS. They belonged to women’s organisations and networks, non-governmental organisations and local authorities. Many held senior positions in their organisations and networks. Three were asked about their experience of attending the United Nations Special Session, called to discuss the implementation of Agenda 21 since 1992, held in New York in June 1997 (UNGASS), and the women’s caucus meetings held in parallel to it. One of the 3 was a consultant to LA21 fora who had advised local authorities and international non-governmental organisations. Another was a member of a women’s network and she was an active participant in an LA21 consultative process. She also had many years of experience of working for women’s networks at senior levels. The last of the three was the co-coordinator of the Round Table project, a member of the national Local Agenda 21 Steering Committee, and towards the end of the life of the project she became an employee of a unitary authority with responsibility for further developing and implementing their Local Agenda 21 strategy. She too had considerable experience of working at a senior level as an employee of a women’s network.

Data collection and analysis

Table 1.2 shows the types and sources of information collected. The table format is based on Creswell’s data collection matrix (1998, p362). The source of information is indicated in the left-hand column. The type of information collection is indicated with a ✓.

Information	Observation	Working Group	Interviews	Content analysis	Documents.
Project participants	✓	✓	✓		
Staff based at UNED-UK	✓	✓	✓		
Records of lobby meetings	✓		✓		✓
Reports/newsletters				✓	
Agenda 21				✓	
UK strategies				✓	

Table 1.2: Types of data collected.

Participant observation

Through participant observation of Round Table meetings the activities of participants were recorded and assessed. This experience allowed an understanding of how the campaigns and projects of constituent organisations supported the recommendations made in their report (UNED-UK, 1997a). Three working groups were set up, made up of participants in the Round Table. Each group met prior to each of the eight Round Table meetings to discuss and plan their evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21, and their recommendations for improving procedures and attaining specific outcomes. The first of the groups explored the need that they took to be self-evident of demystifying Agenda 21 so that consciousness was raised about it, and about the need to draw in and empower women to associated decision making arenas. The second group presented their evaluation of the sustainability agenda in relation to the need to eradicate poverty, especially among women. The third group drew together key points about their considerations of the planning ethos and mechanisms necessary to (a) empower women to participate in local planning and in LA21, and (b) to take account of environmental, social and economic considerations in such plans. In this way the working groups of the Round Table pooled their experience to critique (a) the progress made since 1992 towards sustainable development as laid out in Agenda 21; (b) made recommendations as to how national strategy could be strengthened and local action be reformed.

As the research was to be carried out contemporaneously with emerging events, a major challenge became that of capturing the essence of the phenomenon of sustainable development in the processes of consultation and awareness raising in the UK, and of how this was related to feminist agendas. I became what Cole (1991) has described as a participant observer, playing an active role in the life of the organisation observed.

The observations I made were structured and analysed around the following themes: networking; methods of awareness raising; impact on lobby targets; insights linked to the key concepts of participation and redistribution. The style of analysis of data can

best be described as “embedded” (Creswell. J.W., 1998, p63). Lessons learned from the case, which are sometimes called “naturalistic generalisations” (op.cit.) were made and these are discussed in chapter six.

Interviews

Twelve were asked questions 1-7. These questions were about the informant’s evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21. The questions were designed to reveal how women’s non-governmental organisations and networks had raised awareness about women, sustainable development and Agenda 21; how the informant or her organisation had used consultative opportunities afforded by LA21; how they thought that women were being represented in these and what they perceived as the strengths and weaknesses of the processes set in motion as a result of Agenda 21. Nine of the interviewees were asked question 8. This asked for information about informants experiences of meetings that were called with government officials in the period immediately preceding the United Nations Special Session (UNGASS) held in June 1997, to review progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 since 1992. Three interviewees of the seven participants in the Round Table who attended UNGASS were asked question 9. This asked about the informants experience of the UNGASS and of networking with women’s organisations from other countries whilst they were there.

Literature review and documentary analysis

Documentary analysis was made of Agenda 21 and of the UK national strategies for sustainable development (DoE, 1994; DETR, 1999). Content analysis of these was carried out and references to women, social inclusion, consultation and indicators of intended policy reforms were noted and analysed. Critical linguistic analysis (associated with the Paris School of Semiotics and the writings of Greimas, 1987; and with Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995) informed my approach to these documents and to surveys carried out on behalf of the Local Government Management Board (LGMB, 1996, 1997a, 1998; Tuxworth, 1996) (discussed in chapters five and seven). Greimas and Fairclough start from the premise that texts reveal power relationships that can aid

our understanding of the context in which “meaning” is made. The planning of a communicative event, the setting in which it takes place, who has control over its organisation, and the scope of debate and audience control are all crucial to understanding any text that emerges from it, (Van Dijk, 1996). This is especially important where contested concepts are being played out in political action.

A close analysis was made of the following: (1) the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which reveals the principles informing Agenda 21; (2) ‘Global Action for women towards sustainable and equitable development’ (chapter 24 of Agenda 21); (3) ‘Principles of Sustainable Development’ (chapter 3 of the first national strategy in the UK, DoE, 1994); and (4) ‘Guiding Principles and Approaches’ (chapter 4 of the second national strategy in the UK, DETR, 1999).

ETHICS

Round Table members were aware that they were being observed as part of a research project. They knew that I was studying the influence of women’s organisations on the sustainability agenda. They knew that I had agreed to play the role of co-coordinator of the Round Table for UNED-UK, and that I had worked with women’s networks in the 1980s and early 1990s which had an interest in the sustainable development agenda. It was agreed that the identity of informants would not be disclosed in the text of this study. However, because the Round Table was itself open to public scrutiny, it was felt inappropriate to withhold information about the names of informants and their organisations. This information is therefore provided in Appendix 1. At various points in the description of the empirical work, organisations and networks are referred to by name where references to their actions are disclosed by publications or events that identify them.

Participation in women’s and anti-poverty networks that had mobilised to influence UNCED and Agenda 21 placed me in a position to formulate the research building

from the perspective of an activist¹². Academic experience gained from studying government, politics and sociology as an undergraduate and postgraduate student provided me with a grounding in political and social theory.

As a participant-observer, I was aware that there can be drawbacks to carrying out research in “one’s own backyard” (Creswell, 1998, p114-5). A cautionary point made by Creswell was that studying people in one’s own institution could lead to the value of the data being compromised. He made the point that “individuals might withhold information, slant information towards what they want the researcher to hear, ...” (Creswell, 1998, p114).

On the positive side, I believed that informants trusted me because I was an “insider”, with direct experience of similar networks working on similar issues that I was now observing and reporting on. This allowed an “action-oriented” research project to be designed. I was a member of one network represented in the project and I had previously worked for a short while for another. These experiences proved useful to understanding the issues prioritised by the Round Table, and the dynamics of networking and lobbying.

On what could be regarded as the negative side, being an insider may have worked against my obtaining a full descriptive account from informants where they assumed that our common experiences meant that they did not fully have to describe or justify what was said. For an “outsider” everything must be explained in detail.

In the balance, I believe that the positive aspects of researching a group that I had a working knowledge of outweighed negative ones.

¹² My curiosity about if, and how, women’s networks would become involved in the emerging sustainability agenda in the UK, had begun with my experience as a participant in women’s networks, National Women’s Network for International Solidarity and Women in Development Europe (WIDE) which had contributed to the women’s agenda being taken on board at UNCED. These networks joined with environmental ones to help to influence Agenda 21.

STANDARDS OF QUALITY AND VERIFICATION

In his discussion of standards of quality and verification, Creswell introduced the key question “how do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate, and ‘right’?” (1998, p193). He goes on to discuss many approaches to verification in qualitative research. He uses the words of Lincoln to make the point that verification in qualitative research is “unquestionably ... a complex and emerging area” (ibid., quoting from Lincoln, 1995). In case study research Creswell recommends that two procedures are followed, that multiple sources of information are drawn on and “member checking” (1998, p213).

Multiple sources of information

Multiple sources of information were drawn on to gain different perspectives on the issues under study and to provide corroborating evidence. Different methods of research were used to analyse different sources of information (eg. observation of and interviews with informants, critical analysis of different types of documentation including grey literature, policy documents and scholarly literature). The structure of the inquiry rested on an empirical study of a women’s network, a critical literature review of research findings about the implementation of LA21 and documentary analysis of national strategies for sustainable development (DoE, 1994; DETR 1999). This allowed for a rich critical analysis of: (a) how women’s representatives set about raising awareness about the available opportunities to influence the sustainability agenda in the 1990s; (b) the extent to which government intended to implement Agenda 21; (c) the role of cross-sectoral actors in the development of LA21.

Member-checking

Earlier drafts of various chapters were shown to five informants. The drafts shown to them featured descriptions of their actions and/or words and they were asked for their views of the findings and interpretations. They were asked to provide their own observations and interpretations, if and where these differed from those of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p314) consider this to be the “most critical technique for establishing credibility” (quoted in Creswell, 1998, p202-3). All feed-

back received confirmed the credibility of the research. Some additional points and passages were added to the drafts as a result.

I spent a prolonged period in the field making observations at Round Table and Working Group meetings, attending conferences and seminars organised by participants and informants, and in the headquarters of UNED-UK. Over the year that I spent in the field I talked to participants and checked my perceptions with them. I learnt about the culture of the organisations they represented and about their experiences of lobbying. This was important to the study because, in part, it resembled an ethnographic research and this is the technique by which ethnographers arrive at their analyses and it is what “gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality” (Creswell, 1998, p201). It was also important because the approach allowed observations to be made that captured the essence of “experiential knowledge” (ibid.) of individuals who were members of, and/or worked in a formal capacity for networks and organisations.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

This study documents how women organised to influence the implementation of Agenda 21 in the UK. A study of this kind has not been attempted before and it therefore fills a gap in the literature¹³. It shows how women’s networks utilised Agenda 21 as a political leverage point and how they linked it with the programmes of their own organisations and networks. A study of how they had begun to do so in the period preceding 1992 was partly documented by Braidotti et al (1994) and their findings and hypothesis about the future provided a jump-off point for the thesis. This is discussed further in chapter four.

Recent literature on gender and sustainable development has enhanced our understanding of how women operate in networks where environmental and developmental policy and planning is challenged (Hombérgh, 1993). Most accounts

¹³ Pezzoli, K. (1997a) ‘Sustainable development: A transdisciplinary overview of the literature’ Journal of Environmental Planning and Management 40(5), p549-574 provides a useful summary.

rely on case studies based in Southern countries. Findings that emerge from these cases tend to point to women's roles as managers of environmental goods (in rural societies), and as providers of leadership in social networks that challenged policy planning and activities that contributed to environmental degradation (Dankelman and Davidson, 1988; Maathai, 1991; Mies and Shiva, 1993; Shiva, 1988). Where this body of research makes reference to women's movements in Northern countries it is usually to emphasise their role in building international solidarity to enhance the power of women in the South, and/or to draw attention to the effect of environmental pollutants in the atmosphere and in the food-chain. Attention is also drawn to movements that have used consumer power to reduce consumption of limited natural commodities and to promote fairer trade (Hombérgh, 1993).

This thesis, on the other hand, focuses on a case study based in the UK. Women's roles in networks are assessed and an evaluation is made of how their actions have (a) set out challenges to the policy-making community and (b) contributed to feminist networks. It adds to sustainable development discourses in so far as it offers an interpretation of key literature and it adds a particular argument, namely that effective sustainable development strategies require participation of all key groups in society to contribute to the planning, content and monitoring of them. It considers how feminist perspectives on networking, participation and redistribution could enhance the content of such strategies and it suggests that associative democracy could facilitate the process of participation and help to build participatory democracy.

THE STRUCTURE AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study is set out over seven chapters. Each chapter addresses questions designed to assess how far feminist action influenced the meanings and the agenda of sustainable development.

This chapter has set out the methodology employed in the case study, the rationale for the study, the participatory, action-oriented approach taken to it, and the methods used.

Chapter one sets out the context of the study mainly in relation to key documents commissioned by, or setting out agreements of the United Nations, namely Our Common Future (WCED, 1987) and Agenda 21 (UN, 1992).

Chapter three is a selective literature review of feminist and non-feminist literature on the key concepts of networking, participation and redistribution. Its purpose is to inform our understanding of the actions of women's organisations involved in consultations for local and national strategies for sustainable development in the UK. The discussion lays the intellectual basis and rationale for the choice of study, and it provides the conceptual framework necessary to illuminate the research questions listed above.

Chapter four shows how women's networks, operating internationally, entered a debate about the nature of sustainable development which had, until then, been carried out without reference to gender inequality. It shows how, in the UK, in Europe, and at the international level women's networks influenced the emerging agenda of the UN. Issues that occupied feminists in the UK in recent decades are shown to be congruent with those that had occupied women's representatives acting transnationally and focusing on the UNCED arena in the early 1990s. The question is posed of how stronger networks could be built, nationally and transnationally, in order to effectively hold governments to implementing Agenda 21.

Chapter five makes an assessment of the local Agenda 21 (LA21) process in the UK, (1993-97), focussing especially on the nature of local consultations, and related public policy making processes at the level of local government. It addresses the question: what issues are raised in the literature that are relevant to the access and power of women's organisations to influence the meanings and agenda of sustainable development, and was LA21 used as a vehicle for social inclusion? From a critical review of the LA21 literature on consultations, it is found that it was not. It is argued

that the key, and crucial reason why LA21 was not is that there was no support for such a role from national government.

Chapter six presents the findings of the empirical study of the Gender-21 UNED-UK network. It considers the concerns of women's organisations represented by the network. It considers how the opportunities available to them were utilised and what power they believed that they had to influence the sustainable development agenda. Despite the hostile national environment that the network operated in, some progress was made.

Chapter seven provides a discussion of the findings of the case study and puts forward conclusions and recommendations. It suggests that more progress could have been made under a Labour than Conservative government, and that women's networks influenced the Labour government up to a point. However, the point of influence fell short of securing clear and specific commitments relating to the restructuring of participatory or consultative fora designed to inform the progress of sustainable development.

3. KEY CONCEPTS: NETWORKING, PARTICIPATION AND REDISTRIBUTION

In chapter one, perspectives on sustainable development found in the key documents of Our Common Future and Agenda 21 were discussed, and their importance to the overall study was stated. In this chapter the concept of networking is added to those of participation and redistribution, which are further examined from feminist perspectives. Some insights from non-feminist literature are added. It was envisaged that seen together, these different perspectives would aid our understanding of the dynamics likely to occur in the national consultative arena, involving women and their representatives.

Where feminist perspectives are discussed below, these draw mainly on socialist political philosophy. However, socialist feminist literature is discussed alongside insights from liberal, Black and eco-feminism, which are also important. Socialist feminism draws attention to how women and men stand in a different relationship to the economy and to the vested interests of male power bound up in it. Liberal feminism draws attention to how women and men stand in a different relationship to the law. Black feminism exposed the middle-class nature of much of the liberal and socialist feminist perspective, and drew attention to the potential that exists for building progressive networks. Eco-feminism points to how women and men stand in a different relationship to the natural world. Eco-feminist views examined below also emphasise that new networks capable of delivering a radical agenda that included feminism needed to be built.¹⁴

¹⁴ It is acknowledged that there are now many strands to feminism. Liberal feminism drew attention to inequalities between women and men underpinned by law and political theory (Jaggar, 1983; Moller-Okin, 1980). Texts dating from the early 1980s identified political divisions among liberal, socialist and radical feminists (Randall, 1982; Coote and Campbell, 1987). Among socialist feminists were those who advocated Marxist and non-Marxist positions (a good discussion of this can be found in Jaggar, 1983). For them the primary site of oppression was the capitalist state. Radical feminist politics departed from socialist perspectives in that proponents identified patriarchy as the primary site of oppression and in response they advocated various forms of separatism. By the 1980s discourses on Black feminism had opened up. These pointed to the need to clarify differences among women, and among feminist strategists, according to colour, race, ethnicity and class (hooks, 1984; Bryan, Dadze

All the perspectives drawn on below argue that collective means are required to transform society into one that is more egalitarian. They argue that women's subordinate position in society and, in particular their unequal access to material resources are caused in part by patriarchy (vested male interests in maintaining a status quo in which women play subordinate roles) and in part by an economy that is overly market driven. Particular attention is given to what commentators have said about the structure of society and the part that public policy and political institutions play in supporting social relationships and relationships between people, the economy and the environment. I posit the view that feminist and non-feminist viewpoints arising from the literature could be usefully linked together, in theory and in practice, by reference to literature on participatory democracy and that participatory democracy is necessary to building sustainable development.

NETWORKING

The purposes of any social movement network include the dissemination of ideas, setting of agendas, capture of media attention, consciousness raising and creating new meanings and identities (Castells, 1997). Social movements can be made up of networks including individuals and organisations. Networks and movements may act in solidarity with one another, for the purpose of political, social and economic causes. There has been a growth in networks and alliances creating new spaces in which politics can work. Were the more progressive among these to work alongside social democratic governments, the potential for new forms of social action could be realised (MacGregor, 1999).

and Scafe, 1985). The former proposed the advocacy of feminism as part of an egalitarian political platform, and that international solidarity be built between feminists intending to challenge inequalities caused by racism, capitalism and patriarchy. The latter drew attention to the role of earlier feminist action and writing and to that of the welfare state in Britain in marginalising Black women's experience and perspectives. The emergence of eco-feminism as a movement has been traced to a similar time period (late 1970s – early 1980s). It also encompasses a number of perspectives such as radical, cultural, spiritual, pacifist and socialist (Mellor, 1997). Eco-feminist writing acknowledges international networking and the politics of international development as an important point of reference for the movement (ibid.). The categories of liberal, socialist and radical remain important ones to understanding feminist debates today, although the content of these categories changes in important ways, over time, according to the dialectics of political, economic and cultural processes (Bryson, 1999).

The following literature is useful in indicating a variety of ways that feminist and environmental networks have both theorised and attempted to carry out consciousness raising and agenda setting, what they achieved and how they achieved it and what obstacles were met with and their effects.

International networks

Feminist theory reminds us that political education and role models utilised in networks are important. All but liberal feminism reminds us that the “male norm” is not to be aspired to, and that defining identities and aspirations according to ones own values and lifestyles is. Included in this ‘identity’ is a collective one and one purpose of this is to build a political movement that advocates feminism (hooks, 1984; 1987). Black feminists were among those who pointed to the need to acknowledge diversity among women, to build bridges and solidarity among them, and to include working class perspectives and role models. They reminded us that strategic alliances could be built around specific campaigns. Non-feminist networks can be allies (Bryson, 1999; hooks 1984; 1987). In theory, networks can develop power bases capable of redefining meanings and influencing political agendas, in this way the power to resist oppressive structures can be developed (hooks, 1984; 1987).

How the international process of feminist organisation working within a variety of governmental and non-governmental organisations has acted to influence United Nations policy agendas has been documented elsewhere (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). By 1991 these networks had begun to link with national feminist and anti-poverty organisations with the intention of consciousness raising on the interconnections between structural, political and economic causes of the continuation of women’s oppression (WIDE, 1991). Many networks inter-linked during the preparatory meetings for UNCED (Braidotti et. al. 1994).

The hypothesis developed from an eco-feminist perspective by Braidotti et. al. about the potential for networking in the post UNCED arena was that temporary coalitions

between different groups based on those formed prior to UNCED would continue to develop and mature and that some may in time become more permanent. Braidotti et al., envisaged these as capable of including marginalised individuals not usually participating in social movements, and who were under-represented at UNCED. They felt that it might be possible to build coalitions among actors that crossed traditional institutional boundaries, taking in feminists, greens and other radicals working in governmental as well as non-governmental organisations. This implied a vast amount of outreach. However, they also articulated their realisation that unequal power and access to information would make their recommendations challenging, both to those with more power and resources and to those with relatively little power and fewer resources. Implicit in their argument is the view that individuals and groups inspired by feminism and deep ecology would work together to enable the circulation of information between individuals from different backgrounds and that they would find ways of including grassroots groups. Solidarity between individuals and groups would occur and this would form the basis for accountability (op.cit. p177-9). Mellor also argued that since the “traditional bases of political solidarity” from within working class movements have been eroded, new bases for solidarity are necessary. She argued that there is the potential for feminists and ecologists to play such a role (1997, Preface). The reality was that at UNCED, members of elites attended and participated in it and in the consultations that preceded it (Braidotti et al).

Since it would be from women’s networks that the impetus for political action would need to emerge, insights from Bryson and hooks served to establish that the potential existed. These would need to be capable of networking with other progressive forces and of initiating and winning a debate about the necessary support for participation, citizenship and redistribution. Castells made an assessment of the impact of the feminist movement and concluded that it had been immense and revolutionary (1997, p136). Like Lovenduski and Randall (1993), he observed that feminist principles had transformed women’s consciousness and social roles the world over, even where explicit feminist ideology is absent (1997, p158). However, despite the perception on the part of Braidotti et al., that new networks had been formed during the UNCED

process, it remained to be seen if these would sufficiently link with and influence local and national networks in the post-UNCED arena.

WED Networks

We learn from the WED (women, environment, and development) literature about the prominent roles in awareness raising, campaigning and protest action that women played in mixed-gender and multiple-issue struggles mainly in the South. Among the most often quoted of these, women were said to have played leading roles in attempts to avert environmental destruction. Urban and rural planners had not sufficiently consulted with local people, for example, in the Chipko Movement in India, and in the Green Belt movement in Kenya (Shiva, 1988; Maathai 1981; Dankleman and Davidson, 1988; Hombergh, 1993). These movements linked issues that were not solely feminist or environmentalist with those of community politics and development. Citing Shallat (1990), Hombergh states that, since the Stockholm conference in 1972, networks can be seen to have broadened their scope (e.g. on the number of issues they attempt to raise awareness about and mobilise political action), with the women's, peace and "green" consumer movements working to articulate convergence between their objectives (1993, p96-97).

In my view, in order to influence the sustainable development agenda, feminist networks in the UK would have to network widely in order to influence other progressive forces across a number of stakeholder groups (by which I mean non-governmental and governmental sector groups). In this way, they might come to participate in networks that resembled WED networks operative in Southern countries.

Feminist networks in the UK

An important function of women's networks in the UK has been to attempt to operationalise decentralised forms of organisation. Power sharing, consciousness raising, campaigning and protest were tried with varying degrees of success. The strength of the approaches to networking taken by the early Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) (1970s and 1980s) includes the facilitation and articulation of

political agendas through consciousness raising and political action. There was some success in influencing policy platforms.

The diffusion of feminist ideas has been shown to be a possible effect of decentralised power and this can be seen as a gain or as co-option (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993, p356-7). This has gone hand in hand with feminists moving into established political institutions and parties (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993, p353-362). By the 1980s there was some evidence to show that the movement was in decline in the UK, as exemplified by the reduction in the numbers of local authorities employing women's officers and having women's committees (Bryson, 1999). Research evidence marshaled by Lovenduski and Randall focused on the decline in the visibility of feminism during the 1980s. They found that this was due to changes in policy orientation under the then Conservative government such that local authorities reduced support for positive action in favour of women. A large number of women's organisations had become dependent upon state agencies for support and funding was dismantled as a result of changes in central-local government funding policy. A further reason for decline was that there were internal conflicts among feminist activists, especially between radicals and socialists (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993, p95-6). This picture is a generalised one. Lovenduski and Randall showed that feminism continued to flourish in Scotland, and in parts of England such as Leeds, and this they thought to be due to support from local authorities and local political parties (op. cit.).

The National Association of Local Government Women's Committees (NALGWC) provides an example of how feminists began to organise and influence the formal political arena and something of what might be achieved, given adequate political support from political parties and from local government. Bryson, (1999), Coote and Campbell, (1987), Greed, (1994) and Lovenduski and Randall, (1993), all agreed that NALGWC's success was made possible by the support it received from the New Left, in power in the GLC (1982-85). It is an example of a network that linked formal and informal organisations. Its remit was to improve the situation of women in London, to act as a pressure group to the Council and as a support to voluntary organisations. It

consulted with women's organisations in London and co-opted women to ensure the representation of working class, ethnic minority, and lesbian and disabled women. It mobilised women who had never been active before (Bryson, 1999). Following the demise of the GLC in 1985, the Committees relocated to Manchester and began to service local government women's committees, of which there were approximately 60 in the late 1980s. By 1994 the number of committees had dropped to 43. NALGWC networked within the confines of local politics. The fate of the committees was that there was a reduction in their power due to "lack of genuine political backing or understanding of feminist issues", financial constraints, (Bryson, 1999, p104), and ultimately to feminist activists becoming remote from them (Lovenduski and Randall, 1993, p206-7). Despite this, Bryson argued that today women's committees continue to play an important role in some Labour authorities, influencing policy and linking feminism from the voluntary sector with local politics (1999, p104). Lovenduski and Randall's research showed that "networking has been very important to the women's committee movement, providing considerable support to women's officers [but that] ... Typically, they walk a tightrope between officer initiative and councillor hostility." (1993, p203).

What can be learnt from this is that networks such as NALGWC are likely to have more success where they have political and financial support and where their constituencies are not in conflict with each other. NALGWC was able to raise the profile of women's organisations in London within the GLC and through the media, and it raised consciousness about the need to adequately fund and resource groups, particularly marginalised and disadvantaged ones. Its success was not of a lasting nature because the world of politics is precarious and support from political regimes often short lived. However, successes such as theirs leave marks and these can ultimately aid subsequent attempts by feminists to influence the political agenda by providing examples of what worked, why and how. These are important lessons. Ideally, for Agenda 21 consultations to work well, a revival of interest in women's issues through a combination of party political, governmental and non-governmental

representatives would have to be forged. The views of women's organisations would have to be brought into the public world of policy planning and evaluation.

Some of the problems associated with networking and feminist participatory action have been shown in previous research findings. Studies of the women's movement in western countries, for example, showed that despite attempts, accountability and open decision-making were generally insufficient to satisfy all would be participants (Bryson, 1999; Phillips 1991). One of the reasons for this could be that insufficient equality existed between the different actors. Phillips argued that shared interest rests on substantial social equality. She echoes Aristotle who in The Politics (Saunders, 1981) set out an influential argument to suggest that comparative equality in the sense of wealth, time and political orientation is necessary for trust to form, and provide the basis for political action.

The literature charting the progress of the feminist movement in the UK during the 1980s and early 1990s suggests that feminist organisation did not follow a regular pattern across the country, even though there was evidence that it remained strong in some areas. It also showed that women inspired by feminism, whether or not thinking of themselves as feminists, have been able to move into influential positions within local government. We cannot assume that having women in positions in local government would always produce a "woman friendly" or feminist agenda. However, Barry's research showed that "... 50% of all female councillors in Britain had either belonged to a woman's group or had experience of a campaign over women's issues before being active in party politics, [and that] as a pre-political motivator on the road to participation, women's experience in the Women's Movement is unparalleled," (1991, p200-201). The same research also showed that despite this, there continued to be strong male opposition to women coming into party politics and to the women's agenda that came with it. To quote another of Barry's findings, "It is clear from the interviews that men can both facilitate women's progress into political life, or severely limit it – the 'male brotherhood' usually acting to frustrate women's aspirations," (1991, p199).

Social movements are difficult to keep track of. Campaign issues change and groups form and dissolve as a result of changing priorities. Sub-groups move into areas of specialised experience and knowledge. Some become advocates for others. Some work more directly from within grassroots groups. However, the feminist movement in the UK has shown that individuals and groups mobilise together on certain issues, for instance on abortion law reform (Lovenduski and Outshoorn, 1986). International women's networks attract relatively few activists in the UK, but their influence has been fairly strong at the UN level and, over the years inter-linkages had been made internationally (Keck and Sikkink, 1998).

From these accounts, it might have been assumed that feminist networks would become involved in Agenda 21 consultations and that these might provide new opportunities to inter-link and build solidarity among women's organisations and others, to influence strategies and policies. A "common trait" in policy network research, recently identified by Johansson and Borell (1999) is that power relationships among actors in networks are omitted or underdeveloped in the research. They point out that where a "pluralistic-voluntaristic" slant is put on policy networks, this underestimates power relations, institutional contexts and steering opportunities especially where central government is put forward as one actor among others. Agenda 21 pointed to the need to empower socially excluded groups to participate in LA21. What remained to be seen was if, and how, facilitators of Agenda 21 would achieve this objective.

Social Movements

A movement in favour of sustainable development was clearly in the making by the end of the 1980s. Within this movement were networks of feminist actors.

Rowbotham reminds us that when researching the feminist movement "It is never very clear when history begins. The movement for women's liberation which emerged in the late 1970s is not simply in the past and cannot be perceived only as history. It is also part of politics" (Rowbotham, 1989, p. xii). Castells offers an insight into the

nature and purpose of social movements from which we have “purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society” (1997, p3). Could the “movement” observed by Braidotti et. al., (1994) be usefully further explained and investigated with reference to new social movement theory? How might this prove useful, and what are its known limitations? As Ruggiero (2000) observed, “new social movements are said to be mainly concerned with the ‘grammar of forms of life’, and engaged in conflicts around the quality of life, equality, individual self realisation, participation and human rights” (p.167). What was observed in 1992, by commentators on the UNCED process could certainly fit this description. The new social movement literature alone is, I suggest, insufficient to the task of understanding the phenomenon exemplified by those participating in UNCED and parallel “citizen” events, especially where it holds that “... their space of action is one of non-institutional politics...” (Ruggiero, 2000, quoting Offe, 1985, p.286). That said, a confirming factor is that the social movement actors discussed by Braidotti et. al., (1994) and those who are the subject of the empirical study presented later in this thesis, acted both outside and inside of institutional politics and they provided critiques of “the doctrines and practices of liberal democracy and the welfare state” (Ruggiero, 2000, p286). Also, as one looks at the actions of those who are the subject of subsequent chapters of this thesis, one cannot explain their existence purely in terms of their “impact on the political system” as their function in the sphere of cultural production is an important and defining one also.

Social movement theory is useful to understanding the nature of the networks and movements examined in this study where it is utilised alongside other theories. Feminist movements and networks were discussed above in order to bring out key features of theory and practice. The recent work of Castells is useful to understanding both the international nature of feminist movement and action, (1997, p.134-243), and to the identification of “stages” or “identities” of movements mediated through power relationships (1997, p8). Resistance identity characterised those who are, according to Castells, stigmatised and/or devalued by the logic of the dominant values in society. Project identity occurs when social actors build a new identity that redefines their

position in society and at the same time transforms society itself. Legitimising identity is introduced by the dominant institutions of society to rationalise their domination, and could involve the co-option of some of the ideas of social movements having strong “project” identity (1997, p8). Finally, I turn again to the study of the “Centri Sociali” by Ruggiero from which he was able to point to the fact that in large movements diversity can be such that all three of Castell’s “identities” can be discerned at the same time (Ruggiero, 2000, p.183).

PARTICIPATION

Participation and planning

Buckingham-Hatfield and Evans argued that the central, core values of sustainability are collective and cannot be realised by market forces (1996, postscript). They called for a renewed political commitment to planning public policy and to support for public action. They called for a “reinstatement of the concept of ‘planning’ as a legitimate and necessary activity of government ...” (ibid). They acknowledged that “the experience of post-war planning and urban renewal in Britain left a legacy of distrust” (ibid). However, according to Agenda 21 (discussed in chapter two) sustainable development requires participation in planning. Therefore one would expect that distrust would have to be worked on, with a view to dispelling it, in order that a new era of planning of public policy could occur.

The report of the Committee on Public Participation and Planning (DoE, 1969) was considered a milestone in British policy planning. Following the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, the committee recommended that members of the public be involved in policy-making processes. The committee recommended that organised voluntary groups be brought into the process, and that local authority officers carried out community development programmes with the intention of involving those who would not normally participate of their own accord (op. cit. p13-18). It noted that community development could and should take different forms, depending upon local socio-economic characteristics. From better resourced communities it was envisaged that greater participation in planning would occur. However, it also foresaw that there

would remain groups and individuals that would choose not to participate. We can see from the discussion that follows that the recommendations of the report were not sufficiently taken on board by planners and that instead women, in particular, were effectively excluded from important decision making processes.

A recent study of gender and planning found that planning policy in the UK was based on gender stereotypes that assumed traditional male and female roles in public and private life (Greed, 1994). It found that the scope of issues thought to be relevant to planning by networks such as the National Association of Women's Committees (NALGWC) was much broader than those usually taken into account by planners. NALGWC had been supported by political elites such as the Greater London Council. Greed found that feminist concerns rose up the political and planning agendas during the time that NALGWC operated (op. cit. p169-170). If one looked at the national record however, one found that the visibility of and commitment to including women's organisations and their representatives in participatory planning mechanisms was very low. Indeed, by the early 1990s provision for the public to give their views remained limited. One of Greed's conclusions was that even if there was greater opportunity for local and other communities of interest to participate in planning that "...unless women's views are included in the criteria ... this may not be an improvement." (1994, p22).

A recent discussion paper considered planning in the context of urban regeneration programmes (May, 1997). May's research took the form of an evaluation of regeneration programmes and was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation to "... raise awareness and promote debate on the relevance of gender issues to policy analysis and sustainable interventions in socially excluded urban areas" (1997, p1). May found a lack of gender dimension in: 1) analysis of urban deprivation and needs and problems; 2) designing and implementing area-based programmes; 3) assessing the impact of the programmes; 4) capacity building with community groups and with a range of locally based professionals and outside agencies responsible for sustained regeneration work (1997, p31).

Two more of its conclusions stand out. First that any commitment to a gender aware approach was based on the commitment of individuals, is therefore un-systematized and thus not in the spirit of equal opportunities legislation such as the Equal Pay Act, 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act, 1975 (op. cit. p35-37). Second that community development is essential, but not sufficient, to reverse the phenomenon of social exclusion and that to remedy this gender dimensions should be included in “analysis of needs, setting objectives, targets, processes for implementation and evaluation...” (May, 1997, p38).

It was anticipated that the process of planning public policy would have to be changed so as to allow for the effective representation of women’s views in it as called for by Agenda 21. As with the Town and Country Planning Act 1968, Agenda 21 called for bringing lay-people and groups into policy processes and, where necessary, mobilising group and community potential using participatory methods. May’s study was not published until 1997, but one might have assumed that in the planning of Agenda 21 processes, similar issues to those brought up in her study would have emerged. Had this been the case, facilitators of LA21 would have built in processes to ensure that women’s representatives contributed to needs analysis and to an analysis of measures thought necessary to developing local strategies for sustainable development. Their views could have been taken on board in programmes designed to build capacity among non-governmental groups and in the design and implementation of LA21. An assumption of the study presented in subsequent chapters of this thesis was that if women’s organisations became involved in Agenda 21 consultations, women’s issues would rise up the policy making agenda (as in the case of NALGWC), and that policy makers would take due note of gender issues (learning from evaluations such as that carried out by May). This would rely on women’s representatives forming strong links with policy- making elites in the consultative and lobbying fora.

Participatory democracy

A small but growing literature linking sustainable development and Agenda 21 with issues of representation in western countries assumes a transition to participatory democracy (Lafferty and Meadowcroft, 1996; O’Riordan, 1996; Voisey and O’Riordan, 1997). A crucial point made in the literature is that there is more than one way to institutionalise participatory democracy. Voisey and O’Riordan (1997) argued that current democratic practices and structures in the UK were “seriously flawed”. In the scenario posed by Baker, Koussis, Richardson and Young (1996) existing channels of social democracy would be reformed. In the transition envisaged by them, government would be decentralised. It would support community development, changed working, consumption and production patterns and ethos, and it would introduce eco-taxation and ecological economic methods of accounting.

Important as these views are, the authors do not envisage the transition as engineering changed relationships between women and men. In my view this is a serious limitation. There is also the question of how community development should be carried forward, but this is not clarified in the literature, and it is not clear how mechanisms for achieving this would be resourced. The literature mentioned above is useful in so far as it offers a beginning for a theoretical framework about the kind of democracy necessary to support sustainable development. This is what its authors set out to achieve. In my view the literature could be strengthened if more attention were paid to how group representation might operate within participatory democracy. In theory, associative democracy seems to me to be able to support this. Associative democracy has been advocated as able to represent diverse interests. Its definition and means of implementation differ according to the underlying political ideology of its advocate. These can be found on the Left and on the Right of the political spectrum. Where this thesis takes associative democracy to be useful it advocates a starting point coming from a left-wing perspective. Hirst (1994) has written a good historical account and critical discussion of the idea tracing it from early forms of anarcho-syndicalism, and cooperation (in the theories of those such as Robert Owens and

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon), and later from the ideas of guild socialism and friendly societies (Cole, Laski).

Young (1990) and Phillips (1991) both argued in favour of affirmative action to ensure greater participation by women in the political arena. Phillips warned against strict proportional group representation as such, on the basis that stronger, larger groups, representing their own interests only, would continue to undermine the interests of smaller, weaker ones (op. cit. p153). Her hypothesis was that if equality of gender representation were facilitated by state action, feminist concerns would become established as part of the party political agenda as a matter of course. Her view was based on the experience of female MPs in Norway. She found that they took up feminist issues and had been able to influence public policy reform. She argued that more women should be MPs, if necessary through devising and implementing a quota system designed to bring parity of numbers between females and males because there is such a large disparity between the numbers of women and men participating in the world of politics (op. cit. p72).

Until 1997, the number of female MPs in Britain was very low. The election of 1997 returned 120 female MPs, 100 of which were part of the Labour government (Jones, 1998). One term of office delivered public policy that strongly encouraged women to take up paid work. This can be seen both in the Welfare to Work programme, and in the controversial cut in welfare benefits to single parents (Duncan and Edwards, 1999). Although the latter was highly controversial, the former has come to be seen as increasingly inevitable (Toynbee and Walker, 2001, p20-23). Senior female MPs have been credited with influencing policy reform, especially in the case of child-care (op.cit. p30-31). A recent study by Childs suggests that a majority of the new intake of female MPs saw themselves as (a) taking up women's issues; (b) as being accessed particularly by women in their constituencies about women's issues; (c) impacting on the decision making of government such that a feminisation of it was occurring (2001).

Young's research (1990) into the motivations of the feminist and civil rights movements in America led her to theorise a system of group representation and affirmative action that would be ongoing. In her view, group representation would benefit women and distinctive social and cultural groups. Without it, she argued, weaker identities were likely to be subsumed or "assimilated" into universal "norms".

Achterberg (1996) and MacGregor (1999) considered that associative democracy could be useful in developing governmental and non-governmental structures capable of delivering sustainable development. Associative democracy such as that envisaged by Hirst (op.cit) assumes participatory user group representation. Like Hirst, I do not see associative democracy as a replacement for representative democracy, but rather as a supplement to it (op. cit. p17). In a discussion of "democracy as communication", he comments that:

"Part of the answer [to problems associated with representation] is found in decentralization, limiting the scale and scope of decisions, and part in creating institutions that emphasize a rather different conception of democracy, that is democracy as effective governance based upon an adequate flow of information from governed to governors, and the coordination of the implementation of policy through ongoing consultation with those affected by it" (Hirst, 1994, p35).

In concluding this discussion of participation, I argue the following. The conception of democracy as communication which emphasizes the need for improved governance based on an adequate flow of information from governed to governors (put forward by Hirst), would, in my view, provide a fruitful basis for moving Agenda 21 and sustainable development forward. Various formulae for resourcing the representative organisations of the "governed" exist. A participation income, and/or basic income could go some way to ensuring the economic welfare necessary to inclusive participation in associations (op.cit). Participatory democracy should also extend to the world of work (Pateman, 1970, MacGregor, 1999). In the scenario envisaged by Hirst, the state would fund organisations (in part) and these organisations would provide welfare services in consultation with their constituencies (op. cit). There are

problems associated with state funding of voluntary organisations and with voluntary organisations taking on the roles associated with welfare service delivery, as the “contracting-out” of welfare services has shown (MacGregor, 1990; Waine, 1992). However, if the issues of accountability and representation could be overcome, democratic participation and representation would, in my view, be strengthened.

Associative democracy could be constructed so as to empower weaker, disadvantaged groups, including women’s organisations. This could provide a basis for the extension of the principles of “user-involvement” as practiced in areas such as community care (Beresford, 1992), and of participatory action research (Reason, 1994a; 1994b) by adding criteria designed to promote inclusion of disadvantaged groups and democratic representation.

It seems to me that affirmative action is necessary to ensure greater participation by women in the political arena. Such action would ideally be designed to ensure that a similar number of women and men occupied senior decision-making roles, such as those of MPs. However, affirmative action is also necessary in associated political arenas and in the world of paid employment. As I discuss below, a redistribution of material wealth and power between women and men is necessary to a feminist conception of sustainable development and this is what one would expect women’s organisations participating in Agenda 21 processes to argue in favour of.

REDISTRIBUTION

Sustainable development requires a redistribution of wealth and power and this is necessary for participatory democracy to work. Where poverty, or “relative deprivation”¹⁵, is experienced the chance of effective participation is undermined. I

¹⁵ This definition is favoured by Townsend, (1993, p36) over those put forward as able to describe “basic needs” and “subsistence”. If one uses notions associated with basic needs, sometimes referred to in the literature as “absolute poverty” then the issue of participation in society is not an important one. The minimum necessities to stay alive such as food, water and shelter are considered sufficient to alleviate poverty. Definitions of subsistence tend to focus on quality of life. Townsend argued that where the “‘subsistence’ concept is used it usually minimises the range and depth of human need just as the ‘basic needs’ concept is restricted primarily to the physical facilities of the communities of the Third World (ibid).

see the need for effective participation in decision-making fora as important to the sustainable development agenda and there is ample evidence that poverty, understood as relative deprivation would prevent this (Lister, 1990; 1993; 1997; Oppenheim, 1993; Townsend, 1979; 1993).

Feminist perspectives on redistribution

Commentators such as Pateman, Sassoon, Phillips and Mellor argue that political, social and economic organisation could be engineered to facilitate greater equality of material resources, and social, economic and political power between women and men.

Feminist critiques of the “liberal settlement” analyse women’s realities and what kind of redistributive agenda is necessary¹⁶. Pateman pointed out that theoretically and historically the central criterion for citizenship had been independence (1989, p185).

¹⁶ By “liberal settlement” I mean the political and economic settlement associated with industrialisation. This found expression in the political and economic systems that became firmly established in Europe in the 19th century. These had philosophical roots in the political theory of Locke and Mill, and the economic theory of Ricardo and Malthus. As waged work replaced livelihoods based on subsistence farming and /or cottage industry, so conceptualizations of social life held that two main spheres of social reality existed: “public” life and “private” life. Women were identified with the latter, men with the former. Second wave feminists challenged this notion. The “private” they contended, was so much an intrinsic part of what made the “public” workable that it could not be seen as separate from it. The legacy of the liberal settlement informed Welfare State arrangements. Marshall argued that citizenship rights, crucially the right to work (paid employment) was an important part of welfare state arrangements but he overlooked the fact that in these arrangements women were not seen primarily as workers but as home-makers and carers (Pateman, 1989, p194). Pateman argued that women’s position in society since the 1940s shows the “sexually divided way in which the welfare state has been constructed” (1989, p179). Beveridge’s Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942) proposed that for the purpose of insurance, married women should be seen as the dependants of their husbands. In it, women were seen as homemakers and child carers. However, even before Beveridge’s Report was published, women’s unpaid work did not count as work that underpinned citizenship. Pateman cited a change in classification of unpaid work dating from the middle of the nineteenth century. In 1851 the Census had placed unpaid domestic workers in “... one of the productive classes along with paid work of a similar kind” (1989, p187). By 1911 unpaid housewives had been removed from the category of “economically active”. She pointed out the irony that although welfare state arrangements had placed married women as dependants of their husbands, by the 1970s women were a majority of welfare state recipients of benefits. They were a large number of employees under welfare state arrangements (75% of National Health Service jobs were held by women, and 3/5ths of the 5 million jobs in public health, education and the welfare sector were held by women) (1989, p181). Pateman also pointed out that it was most often women who negotiate, or confront welfare state officials, as mothers; paying rent; dealing with social workers; taking children to clinics; and as carers of the aged.

Men, but not women, have been seen as citizens, individuals and workers. Hegel was the first political theorist to realise that the workings of the market undermined citizenship if individuals were "... left bereft of the resources for social participation" (quoted by Pateman, 1989, p182), for example if they are without work, or earn very little¹⁷.

According to Pateman, another model of citizenship was required. I agree. She posited the view that if women were to argue for a shorter working day, the separation between rights attached to part time and full time paid employment would be challenged. Full employment, as envisaged by the architects of the welfare state has all but disappeared and the opposition between public (civil society) and private (family) spheres, women and citizen, dependent and breadwinner is now less firmly based than it once was (1989, p202). In her imaginary scenario, a broad-based popular political movement would press for a welfare policy to include a guaranteed social income to all adults to provide for subsistence and participation in social life. If secured, a choice about how much to work and when, would allow the organisation of new family forms and arrangements for care. What she opposed was the view that women should become "... workers and citizens like men, and so members of the welfare state like men..." (1989, p.203). Following Wolstonecraft, she advocated a form of democracy that would formally recognise that citizens are both autonomous and need the means to be active citizens, and interdependent, and therefore must acknowledge that each is the collective responsibility of all citizens.

The effect of structuring the welfare state around the principles of the liberal settlement has been that the basis for citizenship and participation in public life for women is not secure, and women are disproportionately represented among the poor (Sainsbury, 1996; Millar and Glendinning, 1987, 1992, Pascall, 1997). The economic basis for effective equality is under-developed and undermined by policies and practices that prevent women from participating on an equal basis with men in the

¹⁷ Hegel had argued that women are natural "social exiles". They were essential to civil society, but in a supporting role.

world of paid work and politics. It is also undermined by political culture that fails to promote equal partnerships in such matters as child-rearing, other forms of caring and homemaking (Sassoon, 1987).

Leading commentators on women and the welfare state have pointed out that its present structure is predicated upon the male model of work (Dale and Foster, 1986; Millar and Glendinning, 1987, 1992; Pascall, 1997; Pateman, 1989; Sainsbury, 1996, Sassoon, 1987). Women's dual roles, in the domestic sphere and in employment, are pointed to as the norm to which a majority of women conform. Despite this, the world of paid work continues to operate on the premise that households comprise one partner in full-time work and one taking most, if not all responsibility for domestic care (Sassoon, 1987).

Sassoon (1987) and Pascall (1997) are among those who argue that caring work is as valuable as paid work and that it plays a key role in the development of society as a whole, and specifically in providing unpaid care to those directly involved in paid employment. It allows those involved in managing and orchestrating the world of production to draw on both paid and unpaid labour. Funding the provision of child care and other caring services, as well as support for a shorter working week for all (the equal shares model) is put forward as essential (Sassoon, 1987). This would allow women and men opportunities to share unpaid work, help to create the premises for a domestic role for men, and lay the basis for a new division of labour in the world of production, (Phillips, 1999; Sassoon 1987; MacGregor, 1999).

A fundamentally different understanding of the term "full employment" to guide public policy on employment, and on welfare and social security, would be necessary to support these measures (Coote and Campbell, 1987; MacGregor, 1999). It could provide the key to economic justice and prosperity, and would require the state to raise taxation and raise it fairly in order to redistribute wealth, and to help to create jobs (MacGregor, 1999).

Sassoon argued that government could significantly help to facilitate greater equality by supporting structural change. This is because the relationship between women and formal paid work and between them and domestic responsibilities is at present significantly structured by the state.

Dahlerup argued that the state is not the main force capable of creating structural change, rather she poses the questions: “to what extent can the state be a force for change, and will it help in overturning oppression?” (1987, p28). This is particularly pertinent in relation to the implementation of Agenda 21. Sassoon (1987) indicated one way in which the state has in the past, and could again in the future, be a force for positive change in helping to overturn oppression by focusing on how state policies affect or substitute for women’s caring work. She suggests that as an employer of large numbers of women, the public sector has offered ways out of poverty and disadvantage that might otherwise have been experienced. By example and through legislation and public policy, the state can play a central role in influencing employers in the terms and conditions of work they are bound to offer.

Socialist eco-feminists such as Mellor go further in pointing out that an important part of the eco-feminist project is to place feminist and ecological concerns in an “international political –economic context” (1997, p5). In common with those perspectives discussed above, Mellor argued that a redistributive agenda is important because there is a “fundamental division of power, and particularly of labour, between men and women, [which] holds the key to the development of unsustainable patterns of development” (1996, p53). She argued that greater equality between women and men cannot be based on market relationships structured by capitalism, or by a “communistic redistribution of wealth on the present model of industrial production and mass consumption” (1997, p7). This is because neither takes account of socially constructed realities (between women and men or between humans and the natural environment), or of “natural or physical” realities (such as limits to work and consumption due to biological or reproductive functions associated with work and time) or to the relationships that are constructed between the two (ibid).

Unlike socialist or other feminists, eco-feminists such as Mellor argue that women's subordination and ecological degradation are linked. For her (unlike radical eco-feminists), the link is not that women are closer to 'nature'. Rather, "it is not possible to understand the ecologically destructive consequences of dominant trends in human development without understanding their gendered nature" (1997, Preface). Through the division of labour caused by market relationships the market allots economic power and this, in turn "buys" the time of carers or it buys other commodities all of which come from and/or can affect the natural environment. Where the limits to environmental produce, or life sustaining work (such as caring) are abused, it amounts to transcending what she called "biological time" and "ecological time". Biological time she defined as "... the pace of bodily replenishment for human beings" (1997, p188-9). Ecological time is "... the pace of ecological sustainability for non-human nature." (ibid.) Autonomy from biological and ecological time is achieved by ignoring the fact that the economy and much of public and political life is organised in such a way that: "the sex-gender and ecological consequences of economic activities are cast aside as 'externalities' (ibid.).

She argued that a minority of Western women can transcend time defined in these ways, along with a majority of Western men (by buying the time of others and by buying the resources of the Earth), but that at current levels boundaries are abused and un-sustainable development occurs. If "greater equality" between the sexes were secured on the basis of that model, environmental destruction would become much worse than it is because of over consumption and the consequent breaking of natural boundaries or limits to supply. Poverty and inequality would also worsen as the boundaries that define a decent quality of life would be broken and inequalities maintained (op.cit. p190).

Eco-feminist perspectives are valuable because they focus attention on the fact that we live in one world and that socially constructed relationships played out in one part of it impact differentially on other parts of it. They are also valuable because they draw

attention to the need to redistribute power so that the environment as well as caring work is properly valued and respected.

Quality of life: the need for new indicators of progress

Moving towards a quality of life that is more sustainable would involve evaluating what has worked and what has not worked in the past. Public policy and economic production and consumption arrangements and patterns need to be re-viewed and re-valued. Indicators of progress must be re-cast. How valuations of progress towards sustainable development could be made and represented in qualitative and quantitative terms is laid out in part by Henderson (1994). Her view is that these need to be expressed in terms of how life is lived by women and men. Qualitative indicators coupled with more traditional, economic terms as measured by GNP could go some way to changing perceptions of progress, and aiding an understanding of the kinds of redistribution, and/or reorganization necessary. Important here is the notion of feed back, and regular participatory evaluation. Largely qualitative data would have to be drawn on to express these. The organisation and reform of economic reporting is highlighted. Reform would be based on data that ensured that the knowledge base upon which public policy decisions were made drew data from socially inclusive fora. In addition, there is an insistence that those women who have been conceptualised by public policy makers as serving only, or primarily, a caring or homemaking function have been inadequately valued, and cared for in broad social welfare arrangements in the past. There is therefore an insistence that life-sustaining and life-enhancing work must be acknowledged, honoured and adequately resourced. Policy impact audits and accounting mechanisms would also be based on such data.

In conclusion to this section, I agree with the argument that for notions of progress to change, definitions and indicators of progress must also change. However, as I planned the research underpinning this thesis, it remained to be seen which agenda women's organisations in the UK would argue should be at the heart of strategies for sustainable development. In my view, a redistribution of material resources is necessary to favour women so as to enable them to access decision-making arenas

associated with sustainable development and with citizenship. Although eco-feminists such as Mellor note that more access to “decision-making arenas” is necessary, they do not offer concrete ideas about how women should participate in political institutions. They tend to emphasise that women’s knowledge should be taken on board in scientific research and consultative fora, rather than participate in such fora directly. I do not think that this would be enough to secure their influence. As Pateman, Sassoon and others discussed above indicate, social and economic policies, as well as political institutions, significantly structure gender relationships and help to determine which individuals have material resources and patterns of economic “dependence”. Dependency on the “benevolence of another” (as Pateman put it) is not sufficient to underpin citizenship.

Another model of citizenship is required and this needs to be linked to another model of full employment and to new political institutions. The models suggested by Pateman and Sassoon could go some way towards restructuring the worlds of work and family life. The model of associative democracy, already discussed above could, in theory, provide a structure in which citizenship drawing on such models could be exercised.

To put this in the context of the 1990s in Britain, the principle of redistribution facilitated by social or economic policy and planning immediately prior to and immediately after Prime Minister John Major signed Agenda 21, had not been on the agenda. Instead redistribution occurred through changes to the tax base. These measures had (a) not favoured the poorest citizens and (b) impoverished welfare services (MacGregor, 1998a). Impoverished welfare services and associated benefit changes had affected women to a greater extent than men (Sainsbury, 1996). Neo-liberal ideology had informed policies (also based on the liberal settlement and discussed by Waylen, 1986) in relation to social security, education and health. Positive discrimination and affirmative action were eschewed by proponents of new-right thinking influenced by the work of Friedman (1962) and Hayek (1944). Despite

this, it remained to be seen if consultations for Agenda 21 would have any significant impact on policy.

It might have been assumed that national and local strategies in the UK would have drawn on Our Common Future and Agenda 21 and that a number of local authorities would use group representation and participatory methods of gathering data for the purpose of developing strategies for sustainable development. However, redistribution of power and wealth poses a fundamental challenge to the basis of the economy and only a very strong desire on the part of government as well as from citizens more generally, to end poverty and to empower excluded groups, would make a substantial difference to that. Feminist perspectives form an important part of discourses about the possible nature of redistribution. For their perspectives to be taken into account, affirmative action would be necessary as well as governmental encouragement of changed work patterns and familial dynamics. Combined with popular support for such measures, the nature of work, and therefore of the basis of the present mode of production, could be reoriented towards development considered sustainable by feminist inspired social movement and organisations as well as to those inspired by environmental considerations.

CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed above can be compared with that reviewed in chapter one. There are overlaps. Key concepts looked at through the particular lens adopted in this chapter suggests that (a) priority must be given to gender relationships in the transition to sustainable development, and (b) the particular form of necessary change to be attached to social, political and economic organisation in the transition to sustainable development is important.

It showed that the theories and activities that motivate the feminist movement in the UK: (a) place them in opposition to those advocating reform based on political and economic liberalism; (b) allow for networking among feminists of different political persuasions on certain issues.

The argument of the thesis that follows is that for their influence to be felt at the policy level, the following would be necessary.

- 1) There would have to be support to end women's oppression mobilised by women's networks, capable of creating alliances across stakeholder networks and movements and ultimately attracting support from political parties and government.
- 2) Those that were charged with facilitating the implementation of Agenda 21 would have to be committed to engineering social inclusion.
- 3) Strategies for sustainable development would have to make a difference to the distribution of wealth and power in favour of women and other disadvantaged groups. These strategies would also show how they were to be based on the views of stakeholder groups, and they would show how all public policy planning and evaluation is relevant.

One of the factors influencing all three things would be the extent to which women's organisations became involved in the consultations and the nature of networking that was carried out in that arena. As non-participation is in part affected by policies and practices associated with social welfare, there is a need to reform these in the light of available evidence, eg., that women are prevented from participating in the world of work on an equal basis with men and that there is inadequate choice available to women or men as to matters such as who takes responsibility for child-rearing, other forms of caring and homemaking.

If women's organisations became significantly involved in Agenda 21 consultations, women's issues could be expected to rise up the policy-making agenda. New forms of representation would need to be mobilised and experimented with, for example, through associative democracy, participatory action research and user involvement. These could help to restructure planning and evaluation of public policy as well as economic accounting and quality of life indicators.

On the part of women's organisations, alliances would need to be mobilised between themselves and others who advocated feminism as part of their own platform within

the arena of Agenda 21 consultative fora and processes. These would be stronger where support came from political parties or other actors from within powerful political institutions.

The following questions emerge from the literature reviewed above and they inform those outlined in chapter one. They are answered in the study presented subsequently.

- 1) Would Agenda 21 processes allow for the effective participation and representation of women?
- 2) If women's organisations participated, would "women's issues" rise up the policy-making agenda?
- 3) Which issues would women's organisations argue for as crucial to sustainable development?
- 4) Would government support affirmative action and/or policy reform designed to change work and family dynamics such that a new model of citizenship and new definition of full employment could emerge as a result of women's action in Agenda 21 processes?
- 5) Would networks, begun during the UNCED process develop to influence local and national sustainable development strategies?
- 6) Would facilitators of LA21 processes network and use outreach programmes to bring in those who are usually socially excluded?

4. THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S NETWORKS ON AGENDA 21

This chapter opens with an account of how some women's organisations set about influencing Agenda 21. Their influence is examined, drawing on research findings of Braidotti, Charkiewicz, Hausler, Wieringa, (1994) and primary source material such as reports of conferences, seminars and other contributions to the UNCED preparations and Agenda 21 itself. The section below entitled 'The emergence of women's perspectives' draws on my own first hand observations of seminars and working group meetings of the European women's network 'Women in Development Europe' (WIDE) held in 1991-2. It also gives access to grey literature published by the WIDE network (WIDE, 1992a-d), which has not been accessed or interpreted by an academic previously. The chapter considers aspects of the shared agenda of women that became clear as a result of organising for UNCED drawing on the above, and on my reading of the Women's Action Agenda 21 (WEDO, 1991) which are evidently important to and reflected in recent feminist action in the UK. It considers the nature and significance of the shared agenda and what is known about articulated points of disagreement between them. Finally, it explores the nature of the opportunities arising from Agenda 21 and finds that these had the potential to enable women to contribute to strategies for sustainable development during the 1990s.

ORGANISING FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The intention of NGO networks to influence the UNCED agenda was made clear in the years preceding it¹⁸. In Britain the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) acted as a network hub. It was recognised by informed NGOs as

¹⁸ NGO fora gathered in the UK and at international and regional planning meetings over the period 1990-1992. These were important to NGOs building shared ideas, networks and responses to the various drafts of Agenda 21 and related documents (the Rio Declaration, Forestry Principles, Climate, Biodiversity and Desertification Conventions)(UN, 1992). They provided a basis for the organisation of the NGO Forum, which was held in parallel to the "official" intergovernmental conference in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992. Alternative treaties to the intergovernmental ones arose from NGO meetings. Agenda Wa Yanachi was the alternative to Agenda 21 and it incorporated the Women's Action Agenda 21 (WEDO, 1991) discussed below.

knowledgeable about the evolving documents and arrangements for consultation prior to UNCED. It acted as a conduit of information, and as a facilitator of meetings designed to brief potential participants in NGO fora and UNCED. In addition, many NGOs lobbied their national governments to incorporate their views into governmental negotiations and documents, and in other specialist networks such as those discussed in the following section.

The emergence of women's perspectives

Women's networks in Britain and Europe held seminars and conferences to consult with members and to gather intelligence from them as well as from grassroots organisations, academics, governmental and Bretton Woods institutions¹⁹. A multiplicity of interests reflecting different facets of sustainable development came to the fore. These intersected on economic, social and environmental concerns and on how national and international policy processes work. An early example of the emergence of women's issues and concerns in this arena can be seen in the seminar organised by the Women's Environmental Network (WEN) and War on Want (WOW) 'Women, environment, development' held in London, March 1989 (WEN/WOW, 1989)²⁰.

WIDE²¹, the European network of women working on international development issues and projects also held conferences, set up working groups and published articles

¹⁹ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were set up by American and allied finance ministers in 1944 at the end of their meetings in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, USA, hence "Bretton Woods" institutions. They were founded in 1944. The purpose of the former was to provide a basis for monetary stability for growing world trade. The latter was at first called the International Bank for Development and Reconstruction, and its purpose was to help to finance European reconstruction following world war two. Since the 1980s they have become the major sources of lending for developing countries. IMF and World Bank policies often require governments to cut social spending, restrain wages, cease price controls and privatise state enterprises in order to support the creation of foreign exchange and trade.

²⁰ WEN is a membership network of women working on and interested in environmental issues. The membership is primarily UK based. Local group activism is facilitated, as are international research links. War on Want is a campaigning and overseas aid organisation. It has members, local groups and international projects and programmes that link those working and interested in anti-poverty strategies.

²¹ WIDE is a feminist network. It links national platforms from most European countries. These platforms consist of national networks and organisations. Members work with or in countries of the South as well as on campaigns and projects linking these with feminist groups in Europe. Throughout

and bulletins to facilitate the emergence of feminist perspectives and solidarity work in their preparations for the event (WIDE, 1992a-d). Fundamental among the issues arising from these activities were that there was a need to increase international links among women, and to increase awareness and focus campaigning momentum on what were identified as structural causes of the crises of environment and development and on evolving an 'alternative economic' paradigm²². As Harcourt and Wacker observed "we are part of a modernization process based not on the quality of life [as many women would choose it] but on economic greed and acquisition leading to an inherent economic and political inequality on a global scale" (WIDE, 1992d). Much of the work of the constituent members of WIDE focused on what were perceived as the causes of women's oppression and poverty exemplified in the effects of traditional, gender blind and market driven economics and development aid policies, structural adjustment and foreign debt imperatives. In their working group and conference proceedings, network publications, and in their contribution to the NGO Forum (held in June 1992 and discussed below) WIDE developed its response to the sustainable development debate and a perspective on the WED (women, environment, development) paradigm. Their response to the debate was to begin to evolve, consolidate and publicise a feminist economic viewpoint, and to align themselves to women working in environmental as well as developmental fields of work. However, they were clear that they did not embrace the "essentialist" feminist viewpoint often associated with eco-feminist positions and actions and with WED. An important trend being acted out here is one of consciously attempting to build solidarity between diverse feminist groups (WIDE, 1992c; 1992d).

the 1990s, the network developed formal links with the DAWN (Development Alternatives – Women's Network), and this in turn is a network of scholars based in Southern countries working on feminist issues. All national platforms have working relationships, or work towards establishing these with national overseas development administrations, and with ministers and members of parliament sympathetic to feminist causes.

²² It was envisaged that this alternative economic paradigm would be based on red-green perspectives, similar in format to 'The Other Economic Summit' or TOES, organised in many G7 countries by NGO groups as a response to and critique of the official economic summit of the G7. WIDE proposed a similar format, but one which prioritised feminist economic viewpoints. At the time of UNCED their views were evolving, and were shared at Planeta Femea, the women's sectoral group at the NGO Forum, June 1992, (WIDE, 1992d). In subsequent years the views were elaborated (e.g., WIDE, 1995).

In March 1991, the United Nations Non Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) facilitated an international meeting of NGOs. Pioneering researchers in the women, environment and development field and women associated with various UN institutions took part²³. Later in 1991 three important international fora were held that brought together women's networks and organisations from around the world. These considered the emerging draft text of Agenda 21. They rejected the dominant mode of development and in doing this they rejected a fundamental argument of Our Common Future, namely that economic development, via the market in an un-reformed state, could steer an acceptable way towards sustainable development. The symposium, 'Women and Children First'²⁴ can be seen as one of the outcomes of women's international networking up to that time. Its report favoured the substitution of the word 'livelihoods' for development, in the sustainable development debate. It argued that this could serve to draw attention to the need to acknowledge the necessity of sustaining those who worked in the informal sector, as well as the formal one, and who were primarily women and children (cited in Braidotti, R., et. al., 1994, p90; Wacker, C., 1992, p12-15).

The symposium acted as a catalyst to focus attention on the fact that up to that time, the draft of Agenda 21, had not considered those aspects of the crises it had set out to find solutions to that had their roots in gender relationships. After the symposium, UNCED organisers agreed that women should be included in consultations, and in the text of Agenda 21. They agreed that women's issues should form a distinct cross sectoral issue at the conference, and that their perspectives should be called for to feed into all issues under negotiation (UNCED, 1991, document PL/LC 40 cited in Wacker, C., 1992). During the official PrepComm session III (held July-August) representatives of women's organisations met daily. They had the support of UNIFEM representatives and of a number of member-state delegations. These factors had a

²³ E.g., Joan Davidson, co author of *Women and Environment in the Third World*, and Philomena Steady, former vice-director of the UN department for the promotion of women participated.

²⁴ The symposium was held in Geneva, 27-30 May, 1991. It was organised by the International Federation of University Women, and sponsored by the Danish government, the UN Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED), UN Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Fund for Population Activities, (UNFPA).

positive influence on the official introduction of women to the proceedings (A/CONF.151/PC/L40, cited in Wacker, 1992). Three important points contained in this document were first, the call for the participation of women in knowledge generation and decision making in the management of sustainable development programmes of Agenda 21. Second, that each sectoral issue taken up in Agenda 21 should lay out specific actions designed to be beneficial to women. Third, that the necessary financial means should be put at the disposal of women to participate as necessary (Wacker, 1992).

In November 1991, two events were held in Miami, Florida, the Global Assembly 'Women and the Environment: Partners in Life', and the 'World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet' (the Women's Congress). The first was co-organised by the environmental programme of the United Nations, (UNEP), and brought together five hundred invited guests who were primarily activists and researchers, along with potential political and other "mentors". The primary purpose of the Assembly was to share accounts of successful projects from around the world that demonstrated women's positive participation in and influence on sustainable development (Homberg, 1993). This is mentioned because it exemplifies the recognition that influential mentors, and political action, are often necessary to changing attitudes and values, and to clarifying the meaning of cutting edge and emergent research and grass roots activism. The second event produced Women's Action Agenda 21 (WEDO, 1991). This was one among many important contributions made by women's representatives and groups to the NGO activities and to the UNCED PrepComs. It is remarkable for its success in bringing an international and shared agenda to the attention of UNCED and to the NGO Forum in June 1992. Some fifteen hundred delegates attended the Congress from eighty countries (ibid.), and included representatives from the networks discussed above (Eccles, 1992; Wacker, 1992). It was organised by the International Policy Action Committee (IPAC)²⁵. Well known social and environmental activists, politicians and researchers were members of IPAC.

²⁵ IPAC originated in the US Foreign Policy Action Committee pioneered by Bella Abzug. The committee had fifty-four members including the following: Petra Kelly, German Green movement; Wangari Maathai, Green Belt Movement, Nairobi, Kenya; Vandana Shiva, Research Foundation for

WOMEN'S ACTION AGENDA 21

The significance of the Women's Action Agenda 21 (women's agenda) is that it is a report on the shared concerns of representatives from many countries acting internationally. This is important because it was a conscious attempt to arrive at a common position among women's representatives on sustainable development, and it is highly critical of the dominant development paradigm. In their view, this paradigm had caused unnecessary economic and political damage and it had structured power relationships that were unfavourable to women. Economic liberalism was criticised but not rejected outright. Suggestions for reform were made. The report amounted to a call for a transformation of social and political mores. It particularly called on the international community and on governments to play a central role in helping to change values and behaviour. Combined action, it was envisaged, should aim at greater social, economic and political equality and between women and men, and Northern and Southern countries. Elements of the inter-governmental document, Agenda 21, indicated that there might already be a change in political will on the part of governments as it recognised that the present modes of development had caused significant crises. A question of whether the will shown amounted to the necessary "critical mass" was as yet unanswered. At this time it was not clear how many, or which governments would sign up to it and the official conference was seven months in the future. Only time would tell. The women's agenda recognised that solidarity between social movements to put pressure on governments would continue to be necessary and it pledged its contributors to continued action to help to bring this about.

Among the measures thought necessary by women's organisations, and which were at times made explicit and at others implied in drafts of the intergovernmental documents, were the following. The women's agenda called on governments to support participatory democracy and to empower and support women to bring their perspectives to bear on policy making on an equal basis to men. As part of this, the

Natural Resource Policy, Dehra Dun, India; Marilyn Waring, economist, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand; Bernadette Vallely, Women's Environmental Network, London, England (WEDO, 1991).

Congress argued that women should be ensured representation to, and among, policy-making elites. It was recommended that there should be no less than 40% women membership constituting democratic and representative policy making bodies. They argued that participatory democracy should be developed and supported by adequate access to information and for scientific and technical information to be informed by representative views of women, and a code of environmental ethics and accountability. They argued for a transfer of resources from paying foreign debts and military use to social and environmental welfare. By these means and through increasing women's access to resources it was hoped that the eradication of poverty could be aided and the status of women in society increased (WEDO, 1991. p16-23).

Tensions existed among delegates to the Congress, and were noted by observers of the proceedings in the following year at the NGO Forum (WEDO, 1991; WIDE, 1992c; Braidotti et. al, 1994). For example, WIDE differentiated between its views on women and the environment, and those that argued that women are "closer to nature". It acknowledged that some took the latter view, but states that in its view this was a false and harmful stereotype, based on assumptions that were uncomfortably resonant of the double standards against which its activists fought in their day to day struggles. Commenting on the Miami congress and on the activities that they later observed in the NGO Forum in Rio de Janeiro, Braidotti et.al., found that there was a major division between delegates who took an essentialist view on women's nature and those who did not. They also observed political and cultural North-South divisions of opinion and priorities, and between participants who were more or less representative of grass-root groups (op.cit.p103).

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S NETWORKS ON AGENDA 21

The fact that women's organisations influenced Agenda 21 is clear. Without women's organised input there would not have been a chapter on women. However, several of the issues that women had agreed as necessary to sustainable development were not reproduced in it (notably those relating to reductions in military expenditure and to

nuclear power) and Agenda 21 was not binding on its signatories. That noted, several of its proposals could provide a basis for and facilitate women's intervention in policy reform and in agenda setting in the future.

The proposals laid out in Table 4.1 below could be taken to indicate the importance of arguments for re-structuring social and economic relationships to effect policy reform, and as potentially helping to transform values towards those inspired by feminists. They are highlighted because they overlap with some of those demands that formed part of the women's agenda discussed above. They are also important because they corroborate recent feminist action and theoretical issues in the UK. This is discussed further in chapter six of this thesis. As such they help to set the scene for what could provide a basis for women's input to national and local strategy formulation in the UK in the period following 1992, and for chapters five and six of this thesis.

Table 4.1: The Women's Agenda

Proposal	<u>Agenda 21</u> Para.No.
Increase the numbers of women in decision-making processes and positions.	24.2(b) 24.3(a)
Policy impact analysis to indicate effects on women and men.	24.2(d) 3.9
Develop or strengthen legislation to prohibit violence towards women.	24.2(h)
Strengthen and empower women's bureaux, NGOs, groups and support capacity building in them.	24.3(b)
Establish more and affordable nurseries; promote equal sharing of household tasks between women and men.	24.3(d)
Develop or support and strengthen equal employment opportunities, equitable remuneration and adequate social support systems and services.	24.3(f)
Establish anti-poverty strategies that link women's rights and democratic participation processes.	3.2
Promote elimination of patterns of over-consumption and of production and investment that are not socially or environmentally "friendly" and evaluate these in ways that show female/male experiences and progress towards capacity building.	24.3 (h) 3.9
Set national budgets and plans to assist women (acknowledged as especially needing such help and as among disadvantaged groups).	3.6(c)
Government support for research into specific effects of public policy on women ²⁶ and the structural links between gender relations, environment and development	24.8

Source: Table 4.1 is adapted from chapters 3, 24 & 28 of Agenda 21

²⁶ For example, paragraph 24.8 of Agenda 21 called for research into the effects of cut-backs in social services, education and health services on women; for research into the integration of the value of unpaid work, including domestic work, in resource accounting mechanisms to better represent the contribution of women to the economy; the development of gender impact analysis in the formulation and monitoring of programmes and policies.

The proposals were made in the context of governments developing national and local strategies for sustainable development by 1996, and women, among other “major groups” were seen as forming a crucial input to consultations to be carried out prior to the publication of these. They relate to core feminist campaigning issues. Where legislation and policy exists in relation to these, feminists seek reform, and/or strengthened measures to ensure its implementation. For example, in the UK this is the case in relation to the sex discrimination and equal employment legislation.

As noted above, the Women’s Action Agenda 21 called for governments to play their part in helping to change attitudes and behaviour and part of this, it was envisaged, should be brought about through participatory democracy and measures to help strengthen the representation of women in and to policy making elites, among other things. Their demands are reflected in Agenda 21 to an extent. However Agenda 21 contains proposals and recommendations rather than firm commitments and this falls short of the demands made in the women’s agenda.

SHARED AGENDAS? CO-OPERATION AND CO-OPTION.

What is clear from an examination of the ways in which women organised for UNCED is that it is possible to evolve shared political agendas from the diverse viewpoints of NGOs. In the prevailing political climate, building solidarity was crucial to this. Important in this thesis is the question of how far groups with distinct and different issue based constituencies developed shared agendas with each other and how effective these were. Could shared agendas be built that were capable of challenging the powerful forces of business, and the attitudes embedded in many kinds of societies about sex-gender roles and relationships?

Theoretical feminist discourses are usually analysed separating out liberal, socialist and radical strands of thought, and by pointing out that the issues, processes of change and ends envisaged are determined by ideological beliefs. However in the case of

women uniting for UNCED it appears that different ideological stances were acknowledged, and that despite these common ground was agreed and lobbied upon. Assuming that networking continued in subsequent consultative arenas, the question arose: 'how far could shared agendas be moved forward, and how far might activists support each other across ideological divides?' Accepting that disagreements would inevitably arise, 'what, if anything might offer scope to further the broad feminist agenda in the UK?' These questions are explored in chapter six.

On the basis of their own research carried out during the UNCED proceedings, Hausler (1994) and Chatterjee and Finger (1994) argued that the proceedings leading up to, and at the time of, the Earth Summit were engineered in such a way as to effectively undermine the efforts of more ecologically radical and left-leaning activists and to co-opt others. In addition they argued that, despite broad agreement about the existence of crises of development and environment, the international economic system that underpinned them remained more or less unaltered, in the inter-governmental solution offered in Agenda 21. However, Hausler (1994) Chatterjee and Finger (1994) admit that the UNCED 'experience' could have strengthened links between social movements. Also, and optimistically, in my view, Agenda 21 could provide a basis, at least for experimentation in involving more women's representatives in policy formulation and evaluation. In turn, this could help to move on the agenda of transforming the economic paradigm, and state machinery (where this has been the case) towards reforming the different ways in which policies and markets act on and assume "gender" roles. The evolution of indicators for sustainable development is one way in which this could be progressed.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this chapter, based on the evidence reviewed, is that without a strong women's network capable of developing a common agenda and able to act internationally, there would not have been a chapter on women in Agenda 21. A central question then became: how would national governments and local authorities, charged with overseeing and facilitating agreements made in Agenda 21, do so in

relation to empowering and enabling women to participate in the agenda setting and evaluation of public policies that was to characterise the post UNCED arena? Would Agenda 21 be used as a basis for enabling and facilitating participatory, accountable and representative consultations, and would it encourage the development of a redistributive agenda in relation to both power and material wealth? Of crucial importance is the question of how women themselves were treated in consultations. These questions are taken up in the next chapter. Further questions addressed below are: How would national women's networks go about building awareness of the need to involve women in participatory consultative and evaluative exercises? How would the issues making up the women's agenda be taken forward into policy making networks? These questions are taken up in chapter six.

5. LOCAL AGENDA 21: WAS IT A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION?

Did government in the UK facilitate agreements made in Agenda 21 as discussed in the last chapter? Was Agenda 21 used as a basis for enabling and facilitating participatory, accountable and representative consultations, and did it encourage the development of a redistributive agenda in relation to both power and material wealth? The main focus of this chapter is on the influence of local authorities on the sustainable development agenda. The focus is on the period 1992-97 and on the local context for the case study that is to be the subject of the next chapter. An account is given of the role envisaged for local authorities in progressing the sustainability agenda, the rationale for it as envisaged in Agenda 21, and an account of the political structure within which local authorities operated.

What follows is a critical review of the relevant literature. I offer a particular reading of this. Scholarly accounts of the implementation of LA21 in particular arenas are examined. My own analysis of some grey literature: Roundtable guidance. Women and sustainable development (LGMB, 1995a), and Local Agenda 21. Case studies (LGMB 1997b), is also included. The LGMB commissioned three surveys of LA21 activities between 1994 and 1996 (Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996, LGMB 1996, LGMB 1997a). These were designed to indicate trends in local authority action taken in relation to LA21. My examination of the survey data raised the point that the crucial question of whether women were explicitly involved in local consultations was not asked until November 1996. The chapter was structured so as to examine the implementation of LA21 in the light of the following questions: What was the role of the Local Agenda 21 Steering Group, and of the Local Government Management Board²⁷ (LGMB)? How did they influence the formation of LA21

²⁷ The LGMB represented the interests of local authorities. It supported the LA21 Steering Group. Its focus was of management and resource issues. It had a board of governors elected by local authority associations. Among other things, it "helps local authorities to be more effective in their work, the way they deliver their services and the way they provide democratic leadership in their communities."

nationally? How far were LA21 consultative exercises used to structure social inclusiveness in decision making for sustainable development? How, if at all, were women's groups included in initiatives facilitated by local authorities?

An argument is presented about the influence of the surveys that is not found in the literature about the implementation of LA21 generally.

The story is one of slow progress and neglect. It is argued that this is because women were not "driving" the process in any significant way and because of the lack of resources and support given to social inclusion as a necessary component of the LA21 process by central government. It is pointed out that available literature was based on what may be described as an emerging pattern of events. As such, the literature reviewed here attempts to capture the "moment", to put some meaning on it and to describe trends observed. Because of the contemporary and ongoing nature of what was reported, very little can be viewed as "conclusive".

LOCAL AGENDA 21 AND AGENDA 21

Local Agenda 21 should be understood as any and all of the means by which Agenda 21 was carried forward in local arenas. A combination of initiatives was used to facilitate the consultation of local communities about priorities for sustainable development. Action was taken involving organisational change in local authorities to effectively integrate sustainability criteria into public policies and strategies. Collectively, these actions provided the bases for local strategies²⁸. In orchestrating LA21 initiatives, local authorities were meant to play a key role and exercise considerable power. It is argued below that LA21 had the potential to build social alliances, and to challenge the tendency shown in the style of governance that developed in the late 1980s and 1990s to centralize power and to weaken local democracy.

(Levett, R., 1993, inside cover). It was re-named the Improvement and Development Agency, (I&DeA), and reorganised by the new Labour Government in 1998.

Introducing Agenda 21 into national and local politics, and to civil society called for the participation of different actors in addition to those governmental and non-governmental elite groups who had shaped it, and who were the focus of previous chapters. It called for the participation of those who would need to be empowered in order to take part, due to their status as socially excluded, and it implied the inclusion of specified “major groups²⁹”. In the period immediately following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, (UNCED), the national governmental emphasis was meant to be on putting policies and mechanisms in place to ensure that the necessary economic, social and environmental reforms were made.

The key role(s) of local authorities were identified in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21. In relation to women, it says that:

“All local authorities in each country should be encouraged to implement and monitor programmes which aim at ensuring that women and youth are represented in decision-making, planning and implementation processes.” (UN, 1992, p 233).

The context in which the representation of women was to be ensured was that:

“Each local authority should enter into a dialogue with its citizens, local organisations and private enterprises and adopt a ‘local Agenda 21’. Through consultation ... local authorities would learn from citizens and from local, civic, community, business and industrial organisations and acquire the information needed for formulating the best strategies. ... Local authority programmes, policies, laws and regulations to achieve Agenda 21 objectives would be assessed and modified, based on local programmes adopted. ... As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilising and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.” (UN, 1992, p233).

²⁸ The target date for completion and publication of local strategies was given in chapter 28 of Agenda 21 as 1996. However, in the UK, the due date was extended to the end of 2000 by the incoming Labour government in 1997 (SOLACE, LGMB, LGA, 1998).

²⁹ Major groups named as important to the process and as able to represent “civil society” were: local authorities, women, children and youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organisations, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers, (Aydin, 1995). Each group is the topic of the chapters that make up section 3 of Agenda 21.

And:

“Critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms agreed to by Governments in all programme areas of Agenda 21 will be the commitment and genuine involvement of all social groups.” (UN, 1992, p219).

Thus local authorities had a key and dynamic role in delivering the agenda of sustainability.

As a major group local authorities were given the opportunity to present their own evidence of progress and barriers to the implementation of Agenda 21 to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), based on local consultations and initiatives. Aydin³⁰ called this an “unprecedented opening” (1995, p12). This was an important departure from established United Nations (UN), practice, which had previously welcomed input from national government, but had not sought it from local government (or other major groups of civil society).

In a speech given at the Global Forum in 1994³¹ Aydin outlined why it was that local authorities were seen as “a fundamental engine of Agenda 21 implementation”. They were seen as potentially closer and more accessible to the communities that they served than national governments and international organisations. They were seen as able to provide a link between communities and the UN process, and to generate activities and keep the momentum begun in Rio alive. In addition they were seen as able to utilise LA21 as a tool for achieving better environments and greater social cohesion needed to help to regain mutual trust, (the loss of which Aydin considered as a mark of “modern social settlements” (1995, p14). The independent input of the major groups was envisaged as offering valuable additional information to that

³⁰ Zehra Aydin was the person responsible for providing advice and information to representatives of major groups on how to participate in and best influence the programme and decisions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). She was known as the ‘Major Groups Focal Point’ and she was based at the Secretariat on the CSD.

³¹ The Global Forum included an ‘International Local Authority Conference’ at which Aydin’s speech was made. It was held in Manchester, June 1994.

collected from national and international governmental organisations. Their input was seen as crucial to increasing the accountability and the transparency of the global process. In addition, they were to aid the formulation of a clearer perspective than would otherwise be possible, to the UN CSD and to national governments, in assessing achievements and identifying problems in progressing the sustainable development agenda (op.cit.).

THE NATIONAL STRATEGY DOCUMENT

The British position was that Agenda 21 was an “environmental” agenda, to be accommodated within the classical “cost-benefit” economic paradigm. The position was crystalised in chapter three of the strategy. It laid out the principles underlying the national position. These were that economic development should both satisfy basic material needs, and improve quality of life, including that of a “good environment” (DoE, 1994, p32); and that sustainable development would promote “environmentally friendly economic activity” and discourage “environmentally damaging activities” (ibid). This would be promoted or discouraged via the mechanisms associated with “cost-benefit” analysis (ibid). Particular notions of “care” for the environment would be promoted, (based upon voluntary action). Action to be taken by government would continue to be based on “the best scientific information available” (DOE, 1994, p33) and when in doubt the “precautionary principle”³² would prevail. (ibid.) Decision making for sustainable development required “better information about environmental impacts” (ibid.) and that this would be made available to and acted on by both government and the private sector (DOE, 1994, p34).

One might have expected that the UK national principles would refer directly to those identified in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development as forming the

³² The 1994 strategy (DoE) points the reader to a definition of the “precautionary principle” as laid out in the “1990 White Paper” and contends that this definition is consistent with others in international usage. However, the 1990 White Paper’s definition shows that (a) the Government foresaw potential situations in which it might take precautionary action, “even where scientific evidence is not conclusive” and (b) implies that any precautionary action taken will be at its own discretion (DOE, 1994, p33). The Rio Declaration on the other hand uses an imperative – “Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.” (UN, 1992, p10).

underpinning for Agenda 21. However, this was not the case. Those outlined in the latter were much broader, clearly indicating the necessity of changing policy and behaviour to enable social and political goals such as the eradication of poverty (UN, 1992, p9). In addition, the “full participation” of women was called for as “essential” to the achievement of sustainable development (op.cit. p11).

In the UK national strategy revisions as to the lifestyle of citizens (DoE, 1994, p207-12) and the day to day management of government (op.cit. p197-99 & 201), and of businesses (op.cit.p213-217), to include environmental criteria were called for, but this was to be achieved voluntarily. Consultations and the wider participation of the public in setting and delivering the agenda via LA21 were welcomed (op.cit. p201), but on the issues of representation and the necessity for a redistribution of wealth and power, to enable socially excluded groups to play an equal part, it was mute. Poverty in the UK was not acknowledged. Nor was women’s involvement and representation considered as essential to a strong civil society.³³ Women were mentioned in the strategy, but only in relation to their being aided by NGOs working in Southern countries particularly as participants in or beneficiaries of poverty alleviating projects (op.cit. p195)³⁴. By comparison, Agenda 21, contained chapters, each of which made recommendations for action on eradicating poverty. In addition the whole of its Section 3 outlined recommendations on how to strengthen major groups in civil society, one of which was women.

The majority of recommendations made in Agenda 21 were written in conditional language. By “conditional language” I mean written in a style that did not fully commit signatories to act, but rather, committed them to considering various actions. What was clear from the language of the UK strategy was what government would, and would not commit itself to, or support. This is significant because, in the UK political context local government power is mediated by central government, and rests

³³ This view of sustainable development was echoed and reinforced in the Green Manifesto of the Conservative Party published prior to the general election in 1997 (Conservative Party, 1997a). For a discussion, see Barber, 1998.

on the doctrine of “ultra vires”. Under this doctrine, local government may act only where it is permitted to do so by statute³⁵. LA21 was constrained by the national strategy (DoE, 1994). However, as we saw above, local authorities had some independent power as a result of Agenda 21 and by 1994, many LA21s were already in progress.

THE RESPONSE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO AGENDA 21

Approximately two thirds of local authorities in the United Kingdom played a key role in LA21 in the years immediately following UNCED, (309 of 541 in 1994-95; 250 of 478 in February 1996; 297 of 475 in November 1996³⁶), (Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996). A national steering group was formed and it raised awareness about Agenda 21, and about the role set out for local government in it. A considerable amount of networking took place within local authorities, among officers groups, and more widely. For example, LA21, environmental, and anti-poverty officers and planners had separate networks that looked at specific areas of interest and concern. In addition, many authorities set up interdepartmental working groups whose remit involved: (a) organising consultations with local citizens and groups; (b) networking with councillors; (c) integrating results of consultative exercises, and Agenda 21 into local policies and strategies (Tuxworth, 1996).

The LGMB supported the LA21 steering group with the help of a grant from the Department of the Environment (Voisey and O’Riordan, 1997). Their regular surveys of LA21 activities, guidance notes and publications amounted to a campaign, urging authorities to take action.

However, local authorities were relative newcomers to the arena of sustainable development. The process of arriving at Agenda 21 had been a long and complex one,

³⁴ For a discussion of this, and a comparison to the national process in relation to women in Australia, see Buckingham-Hatfield and Mathews (1999).

³⁵ This relationship has, arguably been revised under the Local Government Act of 2000 (Church, C. and Young, S. 2000).

³⁶ The overall number of local authorities declined due to local government reorganisation carried out in 1996, (Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996).

and there were difficulties associated with being brought into this arena, and given responsibilities arising from it at a late date. For example, from insights from Backstrand, Kronsell and Soderholm's study of LA21 in Sweden, it is possible to speculate that some local authority representatives felt that they should have had a greater influence on the formation of it (1996³⁷).

Survey evidence revealed that in the UK at least, the non-statutory status of Agenda 21, was considered a major barrier to the influence of local authorities and to the implementation of the sustainability agenda (Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996; Tuxworth, 1996; LGMB, 1997a). Despite this, LA21 was seen as important. By 1996, local authorities in the UK were considered to be (a) taking up the challenge in a fairly vigorous and committed manner and (b) setting some good examples of approaches to it, (along with The Netherlands, Sweden and Norway) (Tuxworth, 1996, p292 and p294³⁸).

The power of local government in the UK was not strong, and it had been weakened by constitutional and administrative reforms carried out since the middle of the 1980s. Reforms to local government amounted to weakening local democratic accountability. Considerable managerial power had been transferred from local authorities to quasi non-governmental organisations (Quangos). The political agenda in the UK was characterised by short-term goals and ad-hoc projects and initiatives that went against the long-term vision set out in the sustainable development arena, (Patterson and Theobald, 1995; Agyeman and Evans, 1995; Patton and Worthington, 1996; Freeman et al., 1996; Machnagthen and Jacobs, 1997; Tuxworth, 1996; Littlewood and While, 1997). Yet, Agenda 21 stated that local authorities should oversee LA21 and it implied

³⁷ As Backstrand, Kronsell and Soderholm observed in their study of Sweden in the national and international arena, confrontational situations occurred between actors who were part of the networking at the preparatory meetings for UNCED, and those who were not, in the period following it (1996, p213). In addition, we can see from the responses to the LGMB commissioned surveys of local authorities in the UK that a significant percentage of them were not "committed to participating in an LA21 process". The response most often given for this was that there was a lack of corporate support, budgetary implications, and lack of information about exactly what was expected of them, and a lack of staff time (Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995, p.3).

³⁸ Tuxworth, (1996): citing the findings of a European survey of LA21 initiatives by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, 1996.

that the representation of major groups should occur through “community consultations”. Community consultations took many different forms and not all set out to attract major group representation. There was no one agreed mechanism of accountability. I agree with Tuxworth’s (1996) insight that local authorities were sensitive to the fact that power which was once wielded by them, in the schema of local democracy, had been handed over to non-democratic decision-making structures to which many were opposed. If they had passed on real power to LA21 fora how could they have ensured that these would be held to account for decisions taken? (op.cit. p296).

The Local Agenda 21 Steering Group

The Local Agenda 21 Steering Group represented local authorities and included other organisations with sector and issue based constituents (Tuxworth, 1996; Voisey and O’Riordan, 1997). Aided by the LGMB, the steering group played a key role in the development of LA21 in supporting and representing local authorities and it acted as a catalyst in mobilising them into action. Key activities included a significant publicity campaign via the publications of and surveys commissioned by the LGMB. Among these, the following were particularly relevant to this study. Roundtable guidance notes, including one on women, provided advice to local authorities on relevant issues on consultation with major groups. A Step by step guide to Agenda 21 for local authorities (Levett, 1993) provided the basis for the surveys commissioned, and, arguably, for the format and priorities that were characteristic of a majority of LA21 strategies.

Roundtable Guidance

Roundtable guidance was produced to aid local authorities in conducting consultations. These covered major issues such as community participation, ‘greening’ the local economy, education and information about Agenda 21 for local authority officers, planning and transport, and covering major groups such as women. The guidance on women and sustainable development (LGMB, 1995a), contained some useful insights into key issues that it was thought would be necessary for local

authorities to engage with in order to achieve socially inclusive LA21 initiatives³⁹. It outlined challenges to women's participation in "decision making" associated with sustainable development. It focused attention on the lack of power and resources related to gendered roles, such as those associated with caring and other informal work, most usually carried out by women. It linked lack of power with poverty and advanced the view that women, especially poor women, lacked the resources to participate in activities associated with participatory citizenship, and that local authorities should seek to empower them, in the interests of sustainability and as a matter of principle in local strategies. Agenda 21 (chapters 3, 24, 28), advocated as much, and this was emphasised. Local authorities were seen as able to raise awareness among women about Agenda 21 (op.cit.) and encourage and support women's participation in initiatives. Funding sustainability initiatives that targeted women's groups was considered important. The guidance also advanced the view that if more women were included in local government as workers, and as elected members, that would be likely to encourage more women to participate in LA21, and similar exercises.

SURVEYS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY LA21 INITIATIVES

Three surveys of the activities of local authorities in relation to LA21 were commissioned by the LGMB between 1994 and 1996⁴⁰. These were carried out by Tuxworth and Carpenter, (1995) Tuxworth and Thomas, (1996) from the Environment Resource and Information Centre, University of Westminster. Approaches to LA21 were being developed and experimented with. Local authorities had flexibility as to how to approach and develop LA21 processes. A key message of the steering group was that local authorities should take up the challenge of helping to stimulate and orchestrate local strategies and activities, and that a crucial aspect of this was to facilitate participatory consultations and to prepare local strategies. It may be assumed that in addition to giving a useful picture of how local authorities took the

³⁹ The guidance was based on the findings of the Roundtable and did not, therefore, carry the authority of the LGMB. This was standard practice and applied to all other guidance notes published.

⁴⁰ A further survey was carried out and published in 1998 (I&DeA, 1999). It is outside of the chronology of the chapter which focuses on 1992-97.

sustainability agenda forward, the questions asked in the surveys influenced their activities and perspectives on what was required. The survey questions would have acted as “sign-posts” as to the agenda, and as encouragement to local authorities who may not otherwise have taken up the initiative, or who were undecided about how to take LA21 forward.

This survey data is analysed further below in relation to the questions as to the potential influence of women’s organisations on LA21 and as to the commitment shown in LA21 to tackling social exclusion as part of the sustainability agenda. Of particular relevance here, are the following questions and responses (taken from LGMB, 1996; 1997a; Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996):

1. In what ways is your authority working to fulfill the community participation requirements of LA21?
2. Does your authority have a formal partnership in relation to Local Agenda 21 with any of the following sectors [business, academia, and non-governmental organisations]?
3. Is your LA21 campaign explicitly involving any of the following groups? Women; older people; ethnic minorities; people with disabilities?
4. What part do sustainable development principles play in your authority’s strategies, policies and activities in the following [public policy/strategy] areas?”
5. What approach has your authority taken to integration of Local Agenda 21 throughout the authority at officer level?
6. What approach has your authority taken to allocating responsibility for Local Agenda 21 issues?
7. Has Local Agenda 21 been discussed by any of your council’s committees?
8. What approach has your authority taken to member involvement with sustainability issues?

A majority of respondents indicated that they had adapted existing consultation procedures to fulfil the participation requirements of LA21, and/or they had developed a new, dedicated procedure such as a forum, a working group or roundtable. Fewer experimented with planning for real exercises, parish maps, visioning or future search exercises. A significant number of authorities said they used partnerships as part of

their LA21 procedure⁴¹. The question could have extended the possible list of partners to include all of the nine major groups instead of stopping short at business, academia and non-governmental organisations. The question went no further than to ask if those who would usually be asked to participate in partnerships⁴² did so in this particular exercise. It did not draw attention to all nine major groups, nor to the need to include representatives of "hard to reach" groups who, by circumstances relating to their "exclusion" and/or lack of resources considered necessary for effective participation, would be unlikely to be self-organisers.

The question about the involvement of women carried especial significance for the argument of this thesis. This central question was not asked until November 1996. Bearing in mind that the date by which local strategies were to have been completed was the end of 1996, (UN, 1992 p233), this was a very late consideration. Responses showed that 67 authorities said they had explicitly involved women⁴³ (LGMB, 1997, p8). This was equivalent to 22.6% of respondents. Of the 475 local authorities surveyed in November 1996, 297 responded (op.cit. p1).

The question should have been asked from the start. Both the question and responses received indicated that there was a small, but growing consciousness among LA21 groups that it was necessary to involve women as a group, and to understand that groups of women overlapped with others identified as socially excluded such as older people, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

Other questions and responses that indicated commitment shown in LA21 to tackling social exclusion as part of the sustainability agenda included one that elicited information about the part that sustainability criteria were judged to have played in influencing policies and strategies. One can see from the survey data that their impact

⁴¹ In 1994-95, 60 authorities said they had a formal partnership with business, 45 with academia and 49 with NGOs. In February 1996 the figures were 63, 52 and 73 respectively, and in November 1996, the figures had risen to 86, 70 and 99 (LGMB, 1996; 1997a; Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996).

⁴² For example, those usually consulted in Planning exercises.

on land-use planning and on environmental services was strong. 90.3%, and 87.2% of respondents respectively, indicated this to be the case. There had been no impact on anti-poverty or welfare services by 1994-95. However, by November 1996, 51.5% of respondents registered a linkage. Additionally, impact was slow to register on economic development and regeneration, but was strongly registered by November 1996 (82.4% of respondents) (Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995; Tuxworth and Thomas, 1996; LGMB, 1997a).

Responses to questions 5-8 above indicated that there was the potential to develop LA21 across local authority departments and in the political arena, through the involvement of elected councillors. Many had set up new officers working groups on LA21 (141 as at November 1996), or they had worked within existing officers working groups (119 as at November 1996). A number involved councillors and council committees through existing committees (200 in November 1996), and through new structures (106 in November 1996) in LA21 work.

PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Assessments by other scholars indicated that the participation and inclusion of local communities and major groups were important legitimating factors in the sustainable development agenda. Most of the commentaries and studies on community participation in LA21 during the 1990s discussed the extent to which the “community” were consulted about, or involved in local projects and contributed to local strategies. However, as Agyeman and Evans pointed out terms such as “community”, and “participation” are problematic (1995) and, most of the commentaries and studies did not attempt to give any sociological breakdown to show which groups were consulted or what their constituencies were.

⁴³ In addition, 52 had involved older people, 46 involved ethnic minority groups and 59 involved people with disabilities.

From the grass-roots up?

There was insufficient evidence to show that a “bottom-up” approach that emphasised empowering and capacity building to enable citizens’ to set agendas was widespread. Various studies of LA21 reported at the “work in progress” stages of local consultations. Authors of the studies pointed out that whilst some LA21 facilitators claimed to be taking seriously the need to take an innovative listening approach to what they described as “community driven” consultations, these were incomplete at the time of reporting and it was therefore impossible to make conclusive evaluations of them (Agyeman and Evans, 1995; Young, 1996b; Church, 1996; Freeman, Littlewood and Whitney, 1996; Williams, 1996; Pinfield, 1996).

LA21 studies that considered the consultation of women

Studies that mentioned the involvement of women were few. One is notable for its investigation of women’s and men’s attitudes to the environment and their participation in environmental groups and campaigns, and it made attempts to link evidence of these to the need for group representation (women and men) in LA21 (Buckingham-Hatfield, 1994, 1995). Buckingham-Hatfield’s research was interesting because it upheld the view that women and men can and should be treated as distinctive groups, with distinctive views about the environment that could be generalised. She acknowledged the difficulties of treating women as a homogeneous group, but found that there was evidence that one could generalise on some significant points. Her study involved ascertaining the environmental attitudes and behaviour of women and men in the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Richmond. She found that women exhibited greater concern over a larger number of issues than men did and that their concerns were more focused on local rather than global issues. Parenthood (for both women and men) appeared to play a role in determining attitudes towards the environment. Men were found to be more likely than women to be involved in formal political action. Women were more likely to belong to ad-hoc informal groups and to take direct action, by altering their domestic behaviour (for example, in relation to recycling), and as consumers, (by attempting to buy “greener” products)

(Buckingham-Hatfield, 1994; 1995⁴⁴). Evidence from her study concurred with some eco-feminist theory, such as that posited by Mies and Shiva, (1993) which had argued that women by virtue of their “nature” had a different relationship to the environment than did men. However, although Buckingham-Hatfield found that attitudes were distinctive, she related this to caring roles, rather than to any innate and “different” connection to “the earth”, on the part of women, as Shiva, in particular, had suggested. Additionally, Buckingham-Hatfield’s evidence was that women showed less concern than do men for international issues, and more for local ones, as part of the environmental agenda. Buckingham-Hatfield did not discuss other kinds of feminist theory in relation to her work. Her evidence suggested that attitudes about and behaviour towards economic and social policies as well as towards issues of power would also prove to be distinctive, but she did not study this part of the sustainability agenda, and no other studies were published on these themes.

Some other studies mentioned the specific involvement of women, but perhaps because of the nature of ongoing research⁴⁵, told us no more than that they were “involved”, or commented that they ought to be. For example, Freeman, Littlewood and Whitney’s study of how the challenge of LA21 was taken up in Birmingham, Bradford, Kirklees, Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield, mentioned that it was important that local authorities encourage “effective participation” of women, children, ethnic minorities, disabled, elderly (1996, p68), but as a reminder, rather than as an example of what they had observed. Agyeman and Evans (1995) pointed out that in addition to women, Leicester LA21 targeted and involved youth, senior citizens, cultural/ethnic groups, disabled people, the unemployed and economically disadvantaged.

⁴⁴ The same study was reported as it progressed in both 1994 and 1995 publications. It was also used as a partial basis for an article published in 1999 that linked lack of national support for treating women as a “major-group” as advocated in Agenda 21, as a primary reason why local authorities had not taken Agenda 21 forward in this spirit (Buckingham-Hatfield and Mathews, 1999).

⁴⁵ Between 1992 and 1997 the LA21 process was incomplete and studies of the period, including the majority of available case studies referred to in this chapter (for example of single authorities) were tentative in their findings and recommendations.

The necessity of involving hard to reach groups

In order to enable and empower “hard to reach groups” to participate, a number of things would have been necessary. Outreach programmes and awareness raising campaigns were needed to (a) correctly identify disadvantaged people; (b) educate them as to the process into which they were to be brought. This was observed by Williams, reflecting on the nature of the ongoing process in the London Borough of Greenwich (1996). Her evidence also showed that where different stakeholder groups were brought into a process they brought different priorities to the table. Businesses identified a need for initiatives to ‘green’ businesses and to have technical advice and assistance on issues such as energy use and wastes. Community groups prioritised poverty, health, education and housing and insisted that local people must be brought into planning and implementation as a matter of crucial importance (op.cit. p110). In addition, adequate funding and the involvement of councillors was necessary (ibid.). On these bases, it might be possible to start to create partnerships amongst different stakeholders to carry participatory initiatives forward. Even though evidence taken from the study of Greenwich did not identify the need to involve women, or any other major group, it provides an example of a project that identified the need to build capacity in favour of involving those who might otherwise be excluded from the proceedings. From the discussion of feminist perspectives on participation explored in chapter three of this thesis, I would conclude that women constitute a “hard to reach” group. Like Williams, the informants to the empirical study presented in chapter six of this thesis believed that outreach programmes and awareness raising programmes are needed to bring women into participatory processes such as LA21.

The potential of partnership approaches

Partnership approaches to building participatory and socially inclusive political systems could have been useful. Williams (1996) observed that where the building of a partnership was to be aspired to, and one begins with an unequal playing field, an incremental approach should be designed to give more power to those who were often under-represented. However, where the literature described initiatives as taking, or including a partnership approach, the following picture emerged.

Some partnerships were presented in the “grey-literature”, such as case studies by the LGMB (1997b). However, these did not appear to have been engineered to include all major groups and, at least in the very brief descriptions offered by the LGMB, there was no mention of capacity building, or of the kinds of issues identified above.

Analysis of the LGMB briefing documenting LA21 case studies revealed that the term partnership was used where organisations from local statutory and non-governmental arenas entered into agreement to carry out projects that usually had an environmental purpose. A further defining feature is that they were funded, often from public and private sources. However, there was nothing intrinsic to their format that marked them out as significantly different to other participatory initiatives, except that they were funded.

The picture that can be formed from studies of participation and partnership is one in which funding was sporadic, and community involvement was much vaunted, but ill defined. As such, they were open to the objection made by Agyeman and Evans, (1995): that the terms were used “unproblematically”. For those of us wishing to know about whether or not traditionally socially excluded groups were (a) reached, (b) if so, how they were reached and (c) whether “social, environmental or economic” capacity was built as a result of it, the studies describing partnership approaches revealed very little.

Where social inclusion or exclusion was mentioned it was often in relation to the perceived need to include particular groups in the environmental agenda, (in helping to set it, or in projects designed to preserve the environment, or to promote “green” living as a panacea for sustainable development). Young made social exclusion one focus of his guide for practitioners, and he made many pertinent points about the need for capacity building and for an agenda to be formulated taking the starting points from those whose “exclusion” was part of the problem to be resolved. However, his focus was on the perceived need to bring socially excluded groups into consultations “about the environment” (1996a, p26-7). An equally important role of LA21 was to

have been to facilitate changed behaviour and attitudes to reflect concern for social equity, and to mobilise the redistributive elements of Agenda 21 discussed in previous chapters of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

The material reviewed above provided a valuable picture of how responses to a complex agenda were developed. The potential for local authorities to play a key mobilizing role was evident, but national constraints on local power were formidable. Exercises in social inclusion required adequate financial resourcing, and the political will necessary to develop and oversee a programme of action through. The dynamics between international, national, local and major group actors discussed here illustrated points made by Johansson and Borell (1999) who have observed that where the advocacy of “pluralistic-voluntaristic” networks is made, power relations, institutional contexts and steering opportunities are underestimated, especially where central government is put forward as one actor among others.

The use of publicity, including surveys by the Local Agenda 21 Steering Group and by the LGMB, can be viewed as a positive force in shaping local authority responses to Agenda 21, and as championing the environmental agenda as well as that of community involvement widely interpreted. However, the surveys can be seen as setting limits on possible approaches to LA21, and to its being an effective vehicle for social inclusion.

The late appearance of the question in the surveys on whether or not women had been explicitly involved in local consultations showed that it was an afterthought. Its late addition can be read as an indication of lost potential to develop the women’s agenda in LA21.

The success of the LA21 initiative rested on the extent to which new structures displaced existing policy making communities and/or transformed these to include new players from the “sustainable development issue network” (Rydin, 1996). If and

where authorities attempted to follow the guidance from the LGMB on women, they provided a stark contrast with the approach of central government. In addition, had they done so, they might well have found themselves up against dynamics such as those described by Bryson whose account of the work of NALGWC showed that hostility by some local councillors played a blocking role to what was a progressive agenda (1999).

Some of the methods of consultation could, potentially, have done much to improve social cohesion and to identify important issues for the agenda including women, social equity and tackling environmental goals. However, all participatory initiatives can be viewed as seriously flawed where they fail to take gender issues and assumptions into account (Greed, 1994). Partnership approaches fell far short of theoretical ones in which equality among partners is taken as given. They fell short of participatory criteria and of the necessary political support valued in feminist evaluations of planning, evaluation and consultation procedures such as those put forward by May (1997), Greed, (1994), and Bryson (1999) as discussed in chapter three.

From a feminist perspective, LA21 represented a missed opportunity. The experience of LA21 is a far cry from what was called for both in Agenda 21, and in comparison to feminist demands (identified in chapters three and four of this thesis). Initiatives could have fostered support for ending women's oppression, although the extent to which the state can do this is limited (Dahlerup, 1987). They could have set out to include and empower women and their representative groups (Phillips, 1991, Young, 1990). Sensitivity to fostering economic and social welfare as a necessary goal of sustainability and as a necessary underpinning for citizenship and effective participation in decision making was necessary (Mies, 1993; MacGregor, 1999; Pateman, 1989).

Previous studies showed that where women were absent from consultation and from planning and evaluative arenas, their issues were always marginalised (Greed, 1994;

May, 1997). For this to cease to be the case it would be necessary for women to be fifty percent of those consulted and they must be representative of different socio-economic and interest groups. The absence of feminist influence on LA21 could be explained if there was a corresponding lack of knowledge about it on the part of women and their representatives, and this is discussed in chapter six. It raises the question of how far feminist activists, and women's representatives participated in LA21, and how far those involved in UNCED and the international arena made efforts to widen their networks and move the sustainable development agenda forward in the UK.

6. WOMEN RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21

This chapter is based on empirical research carried out between July 1996 and June 1997 (as described in chapter two). It extends our appreciation of how networks that had their roots in the international arena and UNCED developed subsequently in the UK. It further explains why women's representation and issues from the women's agenda had been slow in materialising in the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) arena, and what would be necessary to put in place for the women's agenda, based on chapter 24 of Agenda 21, to be implemented.

Informants gave a user perspective⁴⁶ on consultations and processes associated with LA21 that allowed for further examination and explanation of problems outlined in the previous chapter. I begin by describing the origins and the organisation of the "UNED-UK Gender 21 Round Table on Women and Sustainable Development", (the Round Table), in which informants participated. An analysis of the strategies used and issues raised by women's networks to influence the sustainable development agenda as it stood in 1996-97 is then offered.

The experiences of informants provided a "window" through which the process that had been set in motion by Agenda 21 could be viewed. Information gathered was analysed by grouping it into themes. These form the structure for the remainder of this chapter. They are (1) networking strategies, (2) participation, and (3) social and economic disadvantage. A picture of the potential strengths of utilising Agenda 21 and the concept of sustainable development for furthering the interests of women emerged. However, so too did a story of barriers to the realisation of these.

⁴⁶ 24 of the 26 regular participants in the Round Table were informants. See footnote to table 1.1 for an explanation. By "user-perspective" I mean the perspective that is associated with user involvement in planning and/or evaluation of public policy and services, and with citizens who are affected by services and the policies that determine them. These perspectives were discussed in chapter two.

CONTEXT

The Round Table originated in networks that had operated in the period prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). These were associated with the United Nations Environment and Development Committee of the United Nations Association (UNED-UK). UNED-UK acted as a facilitator to the Round Table, which was active between July 1996 and June 1997. It provided financial and administrative support to enable the Round Table to meet and to develop an evaluation of the progress made on the implementation of Agenda 21 in the UK between 1992 and 1996. In addition, it provided educational mentoring about how to lobby the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). UNGASS was organised so as to receive reports of the major groups identified by Agenda 21, via the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, (UN CSD), and to consider their perspectives on the progress that had been made towards the goals of sustainable development.

The work of the Round Table can be seen as structured around a number of events. Table 6.1 gives a summary of these, and provides the context out of which the thematic insights recorded in this chapter emerged.

Table 6.1: Summary of key events structuring the work of the Round Table.

1996
Four meetings of the Round Table took place in July, August, October and November.
Three Working Groups on planning, poverty and the demystification of Agenda 21 were formed.
Round Table participants mobilised to raise awareness about the need for women’s participation in the ‘five year review of the implementation of Agenda 21’.
Round Table participants mobilised campaigns and projects to raise awareness about women’s participation in LA21.
In addition to the Round Table itself, participants were involved in the following pre-United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) consultations: 1. The Local Agenda 21 Steering Group; 2. A meeting between government representatives and NGOs to discuss the government position paper on UNGASS (December 1996).
1997
The report of the Round Table was completed (UNED-UK, 1997a) and made available to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD), and to UK parliamentarians.
General Election, May 1 st produced a Labour government.
Two further meetings of the Round Table took place.
Round Table participants lobbied Members of Parliament prior to, and during UNGASS.

NETWORKING STRATEGIES

The Round Table brought a group of women together to create a new network. It used several methods to raise awareness about women's views on Agenda 21 and the sustainable development agenda. Campaigns and conferences were mounted by participant organisations. Informants participated in, and/or were representatives of others (such as members of networks) who were involved in LA21 consultative fora. A report was produced (UNED-UK, 1997a) and this was presented to the Department of the Environment, (DoE) and to the UN CSD, the purpose of which was to draw their attention to a particular view of progress on those aspects of Agenda 21 most relevant to women. Meetings were held with political decision-makers prior to UNGASS. Informants participated in UNGASS and in an International Women's Caucus that met in parallel to it. These are discussed, in turn, below.

Raising awareness

During 1996-1997 informants addressed seminars and conferences and participated in consultations designed to influence national and local governmental and non-governmental strategy. Table 6.2 gives a summary of these.

In addition, other Round Tables coordinated by UNED-UK, on poverty, education and health, interacted with and exchanged views with the Women's Round Table. All made their reports based on multi-sector input, available to UNGASS. There were a number of shared views, especially between participants in the Women's Round Table and the one on poverty. The latter had input from women involved in the Round Table and similar views can be found in its report (UNED-UK, 1997b)

These events provided opportunities to sensitise networks to the fact that women had been identified as a major group, and that Agenda 21 called for group representation in decision making relating to sustainable development (op.cit., p219-222). Women who attended the conferences were encouraged to participate and to build a group response to Agenda 21, and to governmental strategy, either by making input to the Round

Table meetings or by participating in relevant local consultations. In addition, governmental institutions, such as ALG, became aware of the work of the Round Table.

Table 6.2: Summary of seminars, conferences and consultations addressed by informants

Activity	Target group
Conference. 'Vision for the Future – Speaking out about Agenda 21 in your community'. Organised by the National Federation of Women's Institutes (WI).	Public Affairs Officers of the WI, and local WI groups ⁴⁷ .
Conference. 'Linking up London for a sustainable future'. Organised by the London Ecology Centre.	Organisations interested in the implementation of <u>Agenda 21</u> , and the sustainable development agenda, in London ⁴⁸ .
Conferences and meetings on developing a London Agenda 21. Organised by the Association of London Government (ALG).	The Association for London Government ⁴⁹ .
Sustainable Development Seminar, organised by the Green-Socialist Network	Green Socialist Network. Labour Party. ⁵⁰
Earth Summit II – Setting the agenda for the 21 st century' a conference organised by UNED-UK	The <u>Agenda 21</u> community, interested in and/or involved in evaluating the first five years after UNCED ⁵¹ .

UNED-UK liaised with the Department of the Environment (DoE) and with political parties about the findings of Round Table consultations held between 1995 and 1997. Governmental and parliamentary representatives attended a number of conferences and seminars that were organised in order to facilitate an exchange of views. Table 6.3 provides a summary. The DoE also received copies of the Reports of all of the Round Tables, co-ordinated by UNED-UK (UNED-UK, 1997a; 1997b; 1997c; 1997d).

⁴⁷ This was the first major conference to be held by the WI on Agenda 21. It took place at Denman College 21-24 March 1996. It provided the basis for a major awareness raising campaign reaching over 260,000 members.

⁴⁸ The London Ecology Centre was central to creating a London-wide network. The conference was held at the University of London, 20th April 1996. A Conference Report was produced and it was used in part by representatives from the Centre in presentations made at the UN Habitat II conference held in June 1996 in Istanbul.

⁴⁹ The ALG invited participation from interested non-governmental organisations that had a constituency and interest in London. The evidence from these was to be taken into consideration in the ALG's strategy for London.

⁵⁰ The Green Socialist network has members from a number of different organisations. The purpose of the seminar was to draw up a report to be used in the network, and to be presented to the Labour Party.

Table 6.3: UNED-UK consultative events to inform DoE and/or Political Parties

Date	Event
24 th June 1996	'Priorities for Earth Summit II'. Conference held at Green College, Oxford.
14 th January 1997	Seminar held at UNA, London on 'the Position Paper of the UK Government on Rio + 5'
16 th January 1997	'Labour's Vision for Earth Summit II'. A Seminar held at Whitehall Court, London SW1, hosted by the UNED-UK.

Informants from local authorities were involved in facilitating local consultations designed to inform local strategies for sustainable development. Informants from the non-governmental sector participated in these. Informants from the non-governmental sector also belonged to organisations that used other arenas to raise awareness among their own members and associates. Some communicated with central government departments, such as the DoE, directly, and/or had campaigns and projects funded by them. In interviews, the following question was asked. How, if at all, have you or your organisation, raised awareness about women, sustainable development and Agenda 21?

Table 6.4: The methods used by local authority officers to raise awareness about the need for involvement of women in LA21 consultations and other LA21 processes.

Activity	Aims
Conferences and/or seminars.	To raise awareness among women's groups and within local authorities of the development of local strategies and to receive input to consultations.
Development of women's working group or similar	To receive women's views on sustainable development for consideration in development of local strategy. To make the opportunity available to women's representatives to critique the views of other working groups that were part of the local consultation.
Development of local officer network	To feed women's perspectives on sustainable development to relevant departments with recommendations on how these could be taken account of in service delivery and policy development.
Written materials on the potential role(s) of the local authority	To raise awareness about the need to include and support women and their representatives in LA21 consultations.

⁵¹ This was a consultative event, the purpose of which was for participants to network about their experiences and perceptions of the progress made since UNCED and what they would like to see come out of Earth Summit II (UNGASS). It was held at London University, 5th June 1997.

Table 6.4 shows the methods and aims of LA21 processes⁵² developed by local authority officers, participating in the project, to raise awareness about the need for the involvement of women in LA21. Table 6.5 shows the methods and aims of raising awareness used by participating NGOs.

Through a combination of means such as conferences, local group input to LA21 and written publicity, thousands of women received information about Agenda 21 and potential ways in which they could influence the sustainability agenda. Members of women's NGOs were encouraged to become involved in LA21 consultations, and to use these to sensitise "lobby targets" to their recommendations for policy reform.

Table 6.5: Methods used by women's NGOs to raise awareness about women's perspectives.

Activity	Aims
Conferences	To alert NGO and network members to issues and to opportunities to influence the development and content of strategies for sustainable development.
Educational seminars and written materials	To educate key networkers about women's perspectives on sustainable development. To educate local groups and/or networks to achieve their involvement in NGO campaigns and/or LA21 consultations. To promote women's viewpoints to consultations linked to Agenda 21.
Local Group Action	To make input to LA21 consultations and processes. To give feedback on national governmental strategy. To raise public awareness about women's perspectives on sustainable development.
Communication with Government Departments	To influence the collection and content to statistical and other information relevant to women's experience for use in policy development. To influence public policies.

Input to LA21 consultative fora

LA21 consultative arenas provided opportunities for networking. Some LA21 consultations, supported by local authorities, saw the relevance of taking women's

⁵² LA21 processes included consultations; the integration of relevant local authority work plans; projects working in partnership across sectors (NGO, local government, business, academe).

perspectives into account when developing local strategy and acted on Chapter 24 of Agenda 21. Local authority officers who were involved both in the Round Table network and in the building of LA21 networks had made special efforts to bring women's perspectives into the sustainable development arena. The knowledge and skills of women's and/or equalities officers was drawn upon. Local networks of women's organisations were alerted to available opportunities to influence strategy by local authority and voluntary sector facilitators. In one LA21 project that had specifically set out to canvass the perspectives of women, a high level of commitment existed. One local authority officer said: "Even before the initial public meeting, I'd discussed with Chief Officers and Members the need to have a women's conference and to ensure that their views were represented in the strategy and they were generally supportive of that..."

Informants (who included local authority and non-local authority staff) who were involved in LA21 initiatives told of how women's groups were consulted. Some women's groups were invited to critique draft local strategies. Typically, a co-ordinating forum made up of representatives from the local authority concerned and working groups set up as a result of local awareness raising initiatives drafted local strategies. Women's groups can be seen as part of the dynamic process of LA21 where "working" or "issue" groups developed to feed views into local strategies. Groups were developed that had environmental remits such as: land use; built environment; transport; nature conservation; open spaces; energy use; waste disposal; and economic and social service remits such as: economic development; anti poverty initiatives; and health. A few had working groups on women.

Not all LA21 processes involved women's representatives. However, where this was the case, opportunities to network were opened up. Informants who worked for organisations that had local groups and/or individual members involved in LA21 processes reported that women's groups were not often represented. A challenge had therefore been to find common ground with environmental and other mixed gender

groups. It was unusual for women's officers or equalities officers to be involved in the LA21 consultations directly.

Where Women's Officers were found to be involved, they were fully committed to furthering LA21 by bringing the experience of their work with women in the community to the attention of others concerned with developing strategies and implementing policy. For example, a Women's Officer from a local authority described how the strategy of the Women's Unit that she worked for was adapted to fulfil the criteria that women's views should be taken on board in LA21 processes. It looked at ways of getting women's issues and perspectives recognised in service delivery and policy development. The Unit carried out consultations on a regular basis with local groups, and it recorded the views of enquirers and callers, noting their concerns. These were then brought to the attention of appropriate Council departments or committees. The Council already had a Women's Action Plan, prior to 1992, based on consultations. This related to various departmental briefs and it was brought to the attention of those responsible for developing LA21 strategy. "[In the Equalities Unit]... we work on Agenda 21, among other things. ... it does not specify exactly how to go about implementation. We use directives, policies, action plans ... we use any lever available to work with officers to modify services and to take women's perspectives on board in the delivery of them." (Women's Officer). Another local authority officer said "[we have] a lot of knowledge about different kinds of women's experiences. We ... steer decision makers in the direction of integrating women's perspectives in their work".

Campaigns mounted by women's organisations

What was learnt from the campaigns developed by women's organisations was that there was a great need for awareness raising about Agenda 21 among women's and environmental organisations as well as in government departments. The Women's Institute (WI) was one large organisation participating in the project. A seminar, observed by me in March 1996, discussed the potential of taking up Agenda 21 as a theme for its "public affairs" work. It showed that very few of the Public Affairs

Officers of the WI knew about Agenda 21 at that time. A key task of the officers was to help local WIs⁵³ to represent the views of members on policies to local community decision-makers, and local and national government departments. As a result of the seminar, it was agreed that local views should feed into LA21 arenas, and that WIs would concentrate on building support for a programme focussing on the WI's vision for the 21st century (later called "Pathway to the 21st Century"). Most of their work over the period 1996-97 was to "demystify"⁵⁴ Agenda 21 for members, to bring WI policies (WI 1994)⁵⁵ to the attention of the government, in particular the DoE, and to show that these were important to the achievement of sustainable development. A senior executive from the WI took the view that Agenda 21 would be monitored and evaluated by major groups for many years to come. Representatives of the organisation attended UNGASS. In addition, they worked with a sister organisation, the Association of Country Women Worldwide, to raise awareness internationally about the perspectives of women around the world on sustainable development. Members were urged to "...link with overseas organisations to campaign on global common concerns [and to] identify concerns that could be addressed at EU, Commonwealth or United Nations level ..." (WI, 1997).

Informants pointed out that women's organisations tended not to know about Agenda 21, before campaigns spear-headed by their organisations were implemented. Information about LA21 was not getting through from LA21 fora directly and where it was its relevance to women's organisations was not generally stated. Environmental organisations were better informed about Agenda 21 and opportunities to influence LA21, but tended not to know about, or link with the issues contained in Chapter 24 (on women).

⁵³ The WI had more than 8000 WI's, or local groups at the time.

⁵⁴ The WI took the view that terms such as "Agenda 21" and "sustainable development" needed "unpacking" to enable its membership to engage with the issues and begin to make an input to LA21 consultations. The point was a general one raised by most informants.

⁵⁵ WI policies were based on resolutions voted on by its members. These were published as Speaking Out: A Public Affairs Handbook (1994).

The Women's Environmental Network used Agenda 21 as a basis for local group action and also for international action. Some twenty-five groups worked together. Each took up local issues with their LA21 forums. The main focus of attention for the campaign was to raise awareness about air-pollution, and to bring the debate about the possible implications of air-borne dioxins in breast cancer to the attention of the LA21 community. The WEN groups had a history of campaigning about consumer issues, and argued that there was a need to cut consumption, especially of unnecessary waste and pesticides (which were also implicated in air pollution). Local groups began their LA21 campaigns in 1995 (WEN, 1995a). However, almost immediately, feed-back from local group members suggested that some became "...disenchanted with LA21 consultations at an early stage, especially where these had not been designed to take in the views of women, specifically,... Their fear was that their "gendered" views would simply be lost in the programmes of work leading to local strategies", (Campaigns Officer). On a more positive note, some felt that Agenda 21 provided a platform for presenting proposals for change that joined-up a number of campaign issues. LA21 arenas brought together campaigners such as WEN and the WI with those who were in a position to change policy, such as local authority executives, officers, councillors, and representatives from local businesses, planning and urban regeneration agencies.

Funding Campaigns

Campaigns require resources. Whilst a large number of women were mobilised and encouraged to take campaigning issues to LA21 arenas, the scope for consolidating viewpoints, organising events to bring issues up the political agenda and publishing information was limited. The budgets of women's NGOs, especially smaller ones, were cited as being over-stretched and this severely limited the scope of their awareness raising projects. Some applied for, and received funding specifically to work on Agenda 21 projects (WEN, 1995a), (WI, 1997). For example, WEN received government and match funding for a campaign linking Agenda 21 with their work on air pollution and women's health. The WI also received funding for a project to support awareness-raising about Agenda 21. On the other hand, UNED-UK, (a key player in coordinating cross-sector viewpoints and joint actions) was unsuccessful in

its attempts made in 1996 to secure funding to bring a cross-sectoral group together to participate in the Round Table. One aspect of that project was to have been to bring representatives of socially disadvantaged groups to participatory fora. An informant said "...it is extremely difficult to engineer cross sectoral representation, and that is partly because it is so hard to find funders willing to give money for the purpose ...". (Co-coordinator Round Table). She went on to speculate that low awareness about Agenda 21, about the opportunities to participate in LA21 and the costs associated with participation in consultations, prevented women's perspectives from being adequately articulated in the relevant strategy development arenas. An international women's network (The National Women's Network for International Solidarity), which had played a useful and active part in the preparations prior to UNCED, also had financial problems by the middle of the 1990s. For this reason, this network was prevented from fully rallying its members behind the five-year review. In the past, coordinated viewpoints were articulated, through its members to the UK Platform participating in the European Network, Women in Development Europe (WIDE). In this way smaller organisations had been able to play a part in international conferences of the United Nations and parallel NGO activities. Individual members took part in the Round Table, but on behalf of their own organisations, rather than representing any coordinated, representation of the network itself. Their actions were reported to NWN and to WIDE, but no more.

In summary and in conclusion to this section, the evidence is that informants and their organisations took opportunities to attend key awareness-raising events, to publicise to other women the opportunities available to influence Agenda 21 processes and to sensitise government representatives about their aspirations (Tables, 6.1, 2, 3, 4 & 5), as best they could. Many participated in LA21 consultations. What we saw was that where women's views were not specifically planned into the consultative structures of LA21 arenas, their views were likely to become generalised and ultimately lost. Only where local authority officers themselves took outreach measures to bring LA21 to the attention of women's organisations were less well-informed women likely to have been brought into relevant consultations and processes. Although there were a small

number of local authority officers acting as informants, it is possible to speculate from my research data that even where women were deliberately sought out to participate in consultations that views about why women were to be brought in differed. For example, two officers talked about the need to have parity (or rough parity) of numbers between women and men. Others emphasised that they had specifically asked for input based on women's self-perceptions of priorities and experiences that were different to men's. Where the latter was not the case, representatives of women's groups felt alienated from the process, and felt that their task was made more difficult than it ought to have been. They also felt that it was less likely that their views would be discernable in published local strategies.

From this it can be seen that the basis for solidarity envisaged as necessary by commentators such as Braidotti et. al., (1994) and Mellor (1997) was not sufficiently laid in LA21 arenas to secure accountability. Whilst there was some progress, there was also frustration arising from unequal power relationships within the LA21 arenas and from this we could see an example of the dynamics described by Johansson & Borell (1999), namely that important networking takes place in policy arenas but too little attention to the power of the relative players is given, and a proper understanding of their limitations is not therefore reported.

In the case under discussion here, it is clear that modest resources (both of NGO networks and local authority officers) severely constrained the amount of outreach that was possible. Organised representation taking in the views of all relevant players was never planned for. Accountability in terms of utilising the views canvassed was not in place.

THE REPORT OF THE ROUND TABLE

The report (UNED-UK 1997a) was prepared for the purpose of making an evaluative statement about how the parts of Agenda 21 most relevant to women had been progressed since UNCED in 1992.

Round Table participants identified chapters 3, 8, 10 and 24 as most relevant to women in the UK because they dealt with women and with participation and poverty and because they had been ignored in the national strategy, and acted on in an ad hoc way locally. The report drew attention to the fact that issues such as women's inclusion in planning and consultative events was important to plan for and monitor. So too was the need to recognise that women were among those least likely to participate because they were disproportionately represented among those likely to live in poverty, and to be excluded from participatory activities due to lack of income, and resources (including time). It focused on the need for central and local government to take seriously the implementation of recommendations in Agenda 21 itself and it drew out key parts of it and illustrated their relevance to women.

It was a difficult task to draw together a report that carried the essence of agreement from what amounted to a diverse set of agendas from different women's organisations. Many of the recommendations made in the report quoted Agenda 21, and asked government to act on it. I do not list them all here. Instead, I highlight those that underpinned the discussion that follows in the next section of this chapter "Issues raised by the Round Table network".

On "participation" the report recommended that clauses 8.5(g), 10.5(d), 10.11(c), 24.2(b), 4.3 and 24.3(h) of Agenda 21 be particularly noted and strengthened... (UNED-UK, 1997a p23). These drew attention to the fact that there was a particular need for planners and managers of public policy to offer effective opportunities to women to participate in public policy decision making procedures, and to increase the proportion of women as decision makers, planners and managers. The report added that women should be actively encouraged to "determine their priorities through extensive and practical schemes involving existing support networks" (UNED-UK, 1997a, p17). It was suggested that full use should be made of "existing facilities which already inform, work with and support women" (UNED-UK, 1997a, p18) and. ... plans and programmes should support and integrate existing grassroots schemes into the overall LA21 implementation as well as encourage new grass-roots initiatives."

(ibid). In addition, it recommended that: “Each local authority should have a person responsible for Local Agenda 21 whose brief includes gender issues” (UNED-UK, 1997a,p21).

On “social and economic disadvantage” the report pointed to clauses 3.2 and 3.5(c) of Agenda 21 which had called on governments to develop or reform anti-poverty strategies, in the light of the sustainable development agenda. The report suggested that these should be organised starting with local poverty audits. These should be carried out by local authorities and their findings should be used to plan public policy nationally. It was suggested that the audits could be based on an evaluation of (a) the nature of welfare services and their impact on women and men; (b) the take up of welfare benefits; (c) the quality of the local environment; (d) health profiles; (e) nature of the transport system serving the area, and (f) the quality of community development (op.cit. p12). It was suggested that anti-poverty strategies should contribute to “increased democratic accountability, and the empowerment of women to participate in decision making at all levels affecting their opportunities and life-styles.” (ibid.).

On women’s paid and unpaid employment, clauses 24 (d) and (f) of Agenda 21 were highlighted as central and relevant to securing sustainable development. These called for the “... establishment of more and affordable nurseries and kindergartens by Governments, Local Authorities, employers and other relevant organisations..., [the encouragement of] ... sharing of household tasks by men and women on an equal basis... Programmes to support and strengthen equal employment opportunities and... including child care... parental leave...” (UNED-UK 1997a p7). In addition, the report drew attention to relevant governmental commitments made under the Beijing Platform of Action (UN, 1995), which appeared to strengthen Agenda 21 commitments. For example, to measure and value the contribution that unwaged work makes to the economy and to reflect this in satellite accounts of the GNP (UN, 1995 paragraphs 206 (g.ii) and 24 8(e). It was recommended that hours spent carrying out unpaid work should be reflected in the Census (UNED-UK, 1997a, p10). Also that

income security in old age pensions should reflect adequately the value of this unpaid, or low paid work. (op.cit. p6).

As a basis for moving forward in providing information that would be useful to social scientists and to the policy- making community, the report recommended that “questions about hours spent and kinds of unwaged work were asked in the Census” (op.cit. p10). It suggested that guidance on “mainstreaming” published by the DfEE (1996) be implemented ... and that it should be amended “to include a category to cover unwaged home managers” (ibid.).

The report noted and welcomed the fact that chapter 3 and 24 could provide a basis for an international agenda. However, it pointed out that progress made since 1992 was “difficult to assess [and that it was] clear that women all over the world remain burdened by the poverty and overwork which can be caused by development, ... that in un-sustainable.” (op.cit. p2).

It noted that the UNDP had begun to produce statistical trends and analysis that showed the different experiences of women and men in terms of their socio-economic opportunities, attainment and status and it welcomed this (op.cit. p3). However, it also pointed out that the quality of information about the extent of poverty and disadvantage experienced by women in the UK was not good and did not clearly show up in statistics like those on “low income families” and produced by the Department of Social Security (quoting DSS 1994; CPAG 1993; Millar and Glendinning, 1992) (ibid.)

Two specific recommendations on UK overseas aid were made. These were that UK aid should support the gathering of statistical information about the extent, nature and value put on unpaid work, disaggregated by gender, and that where impact assessments of structural adjustment policies were made that these should be looked at as they had affected women and men, (op.cit. p7).

Informants felt that it was not possible to make recommendations that would serve to “unite” UK and overseas women as there had been insufficient networking and no consensus building on this matter. It was taken as read that women in other countries would be evaluating chapter 24 in relation to their national contexts and that further networking would occur at UNGASS and between UNGASS and the ten year review to be held in 2002.

The significance of the report is that it commented on an incomplete process that did not play out the scenario that had been envisaged in Agenda 21. Participants in the Round Table more or less restricted their report to asking that Agenda 21 be implemented. The significance of it also lays in their suggestions as to how generalised agreements outlined in Agenda 21 could be implemented. It pointed to practices (in policy conception, planning, delivery, monitoring and presentation of information) that fell short of what was envisaged in Agenda 21 and in the broader women’s agenda, and they suggested improvements.

MEETINGS WITH POLITICAL DECISION MAKERS

Opportunities were taken by UNED-UK to bring women’s perspectives to the attention of those engaged in developing strategies as mentioned above (Tables 6.1-5). However, when the UK government’s position paper Five Years on from Rio (DoE, 1996) appeared it was a great disappointment. It simply reported progress on the issues prioritised in the national strategy since 1994 and no more (DoE, 1994). The national strategy had focused on a limited number of environmental and institutional issues and not on the women’s agenda, as outlined in chapter 24 of Agenda 21 at all. Attempts to influence and revise the strategy by women’s groups had been unsuccessful. At a meeting, called at short notice, following the dissemination of the position paper, NGO informants questioned representatives from the DoE about its content. “He [a representative from the DoE] said that the view that had been arrived at was that in the UK we already have equal pay and anti sex discrimination legislation ... which was felt to be adequate to securing most of the key issues arising for women from Agenda 21” (Senior Researcher for A Research Institute). At another point, when

questioned about the absence of an adequate anti-poverty strategy by another informant the response was that "... the view had been taken that the state welfare system prevented any person from falling into poverty such that "absolute" poverty was not experienced except for in exceptional circumstances..." (Advisor, Women's NGO). At the meeting participants advanced the view that the government should acknowledge that progress had not been made on Chapters 3 or 24 of Agenda 21. Each of those chapters contained a number of recommendations for governmental action in relation to women. These centred on the development of participatory and redistributive measures to underpin women's involvement in implementing Agenda 21, and to alleviate poverty experienced by them. Participants asked the government to make a commitment to acting on these in the next phase (1997-2002) of the implementation of Agenda 21. The recommendations made in the report were offered as a starting point for such an initiative.

The mood of participants following the January meeting was one of pessimism. A general election was a matter of weeks away. The position of the Labour Party in opposition was that it was intended that the number of female MPs in the Party's ranks would increase. Manifestos showed that the language of sustainable development had entered the political lexicon of the main parties (Conservative Party, 1997a; Labour Party 1997; Liberal Democrats, 1997). The issue of dealing with poverty had risen up the political agenda for some, the New Deal being one major point of reference (Labour Party, 1997). Commitment to increase welfare spending and general taxation to pay for it fairly another (Liberal Democrats, 1997). However, the specific issue of poverty experienced by women was not central to any party political agenda. Nor was the political debate set upon premises that clearly marked out the need for redistributive measures to favour poor people, or the need to redefine "quality of life", which is central to sustainable development.

The Round Table report was disseminated in April of 1997. On the 1st May, there was a general election and a change of government from Conservative to Labour. During April, representatives of the Round Table met with some Labour MPs who were

sympathetic to its work and supported perspectives put forward by it. A question asked of those who met with parliamentarians or members of political parties in the months prior to, and during UNGASS was: "In the briefing meetings with governmental spokespeople, how were the [public policy] [LA21 consultations] recommendations of the project received, and what, if anything did MPs, MEPs think they could do to help?" A representative of a women's network involved in LA21 who had spoken with a long serving MP said she had immediately seen the relevance to her own constituency of many of the issues contained in the report. The MP's constituency was one that was characterised by social and economic deprivation, with sections of the community impoverished by the run down of local service infrastructure. The MP commented on the call for more direct participation of women, especially those who are often under-represented. In her own constituency she felt that "... women often did not work, they would be keeping the family together, they'd be looking after Gran. It is all very well that government should make commitments under Agenda 21 to ensure that women's views were taken account of in strategies, but they also need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure was in place, and secure". It was felt that the realities of the responsibilities and pressures of everyday life, including women's perceptions of danger, especially on estates where they did not feel safe going out at night, would mean that they'd be unlikely to show an interest in consultations. A stage preceding participation would need to be the mending of infrastructure and the development of a sense of trust in local democracy through the renewal of local democracy.

Meetings between participants in the project and members of the new Labour government, MPs and MEPs took place in April and May of 1997 and paved the way for awareness raising through vehicles such as parliamentary questions. (Cmd. 3746/97/98 (12j); 3747, 3748/97/98 (12c)). Presentations by project participants to high-ranking politicians in the UNGASS arena in June 1997 led to further opportunities to discuss the project's recommendations.

UNGASS provided project participants with opportunities to present the Round Table recommendations to senior UK government officials such as to the then Secretary of State for International Development and Co-operation, Clare Short, MP, and to Michael Meacher, MP, who was then the Secretary for the Environment. This led to a dialogue in which further information was asked for from informants for possible use in governmental initiatives on environmental issues and overseas development. It was suggested by governmental officials that the newly created Women's Unit, placed in the Cabinet Office would take an interest in Agenda 21. A representative from the Women's Unit was subsequently invited to observe the work of the Advisory Group to the Gender 21 project and the offer was accepted. The progress of the Gender 21 project in the period following UNGASS is discussed in chapter seven.

In summary and conclusion to this section, the picture in relation to meetings with political decision makers was a mixed one. Whilst there were some good relationships established between informant groups and government officials, not all of them were nurtured in the long term. One representative of the Round Table who participated in lobbying MPs, went on to become an adviser to the new Labour government on transport. Another took up a senior post within the Department for International Development and Co-operation (DIFDD). However, relationships within the Round Table network became atomised and the potential to keep the network active lost momentum by 2000. However this was at least partly due to lack of funds (UNED-UK, 2000). Informants generally felt that the structure provided by UNED-UK, for progressing issues begun here, had become fairly weak by 2000. A consultant for prominent environmental organisations, and to local authority officers responsible for facilitating LA21, said "There was a strong interest shown in our work by the incoming Labour government. However, team infrastructure was not set up properly, and this ultimately hindered the work ... What was needed, both at UNGASS and after was for a neutral facilitator to give attention to the detailed needs of such a network." For her, as well as some others who attended (including representatives of women's environmental and religious organisations) the lobbying process highlighted difficulties in arriving at joint "positions" to put before government or international

fora such as UNGASS. As she put it "... not all women are kindred spirits, the reality is that some might go with their own agenda ...". A local authority officer pointed to the lack of co-ordination between the views of representatives of LA21 and national representatives. These views echoed others found among informants who indicated a desire for better representative structures to be put in place.

THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CAUCUS AT UNGASS

International women's networks were not as active in preparation for or during UNGASS as might have been expected. There were fewer women attending UNGASS and the women's parallel events were fewer than in Rio for UNCED, five years earlier. Six participants in the Round Table attended. One informant said that in her discussions with women in the international women's caucus, it had become clear that "LA21 was still considered to be at a very early stage of development. In many other countries the timetable envisaged in Agenda 21 had been extended and the publication of local strategies in many instances, were still some way off...". This was one possible reason for the relatively low profile of women's organisations at UNGASS. Another reason given for the lower turn out was that it was a "special session". This was a departure from the ten year review that was more usual following major UN Conferences. It was thought that 2002 would provide a higher profile opportunity for women to rally. In addition, it was thought by informants with considerable experience from their jobs as independent consultants to women's and environmental organisations as well as to local authorities that the output of women's energies, and resources, had been huge in relation to the UN Women's Conference held in Beijing two years before and that this might have contributed to the lower turn-out than might otherwise have been the case.

The UN CSD Major Groups co-ordinator had received reports from women's representatives from around the world and had, in turn, made these available to the appropriate regional governmental groups. She also played a key role in helping to engineer meetings and lobbies at UNGASS.

The Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), based in New York, had played a key role in the facilitation and co-ordination of women's views in preparation for UNCED in 1992. However, due to a crisis in resources and personnel changes being experienced by them in 1996-97 their profile and level of activity was much lower and less organised in the run up to UNGASS according to the Coordinator of UNED-UK and the Co-coordinator of the Round Table. An informant who had held a senior post with a women's network involved in a national campaign and LA21 said "What was difficult for the work of the women's caucus was that their story was one of the inadequacy of the measures taken at national level to ensure that women's organisations were being brought into the LA21 processes. The same issues were really still ongoing, as those that were there five years earlier. Especially on the issue of governmental support to bring new groups and socially excluded voices to the table...". She went on to describe how there were those women's organisations that were new to the process of lobbying UNGASS. This was a positive step, but it also meant that some of the representatives were not as experienced as they would need to be in the future, especially if they were to compete for time and space with the "older hands" many of whom were men, representing environmental organisations. A major factor preventing maximum impact being made by women's networks here was that there had been insufficient preparation and consensus building in the period preceding UNGASS. A view made clear by those who attended was that there would be much more action for the "regular" session (to be held in 2002) to evaluate. As one informant put it "none of the women's groups attending the Caucus had sufficient funds, or the governmental support within their own countries to adequately co-ordinate a lobbying programme prior to UNGASS." All that said, the Caucus was able to make its views known, both by way of a report (Women's Caucus, 1997), by articles placed in the daily NGO lobby newsletter, and in presentations to and meetings with government officials.

The above discussion of informant's experiences of and views about networking strategies indicates that whilst many organisations rallied to give their views about the implementation of LA21 as it stood in 1997, there was still much to achieve. More

needed to be done by government and by LA21 fora in particular, to ensure that opportunities to influence local and national strategies and their evaluation were known about by relevant women's organisations. It is impossible to give a precise indication of the extent of awareness among women's networks, but it is likely that those having environmental or planning remits were informed about the opportunities afforded to them by LA21. However, it was less likely that other kinds of women's organisations such as those having user or advocacy groups whose interests lay in the spheres of social or economic policy knew of them. Where local authority staff and councillors were committed to bringing women in to consultative processes, a wide range of potential contributors from women's networks were likely to have been made aware of the relevance of Agenda 21 and of local strategies for sustainable development that were being developed as a result of it.

Some opportunities were created to meet with political decision-makers prior to June 1997. However, little progress was made at this time due to the fact that the Conservative government was not receptive to the women's agenda being put forward. There were limited opportunities to lobby UNGASS or to participate in the international women's caucus directly. It was not clear that informants had used international networks effectively in the run-up to UNGASS. Some major reasons why included: (1) limited resources; (2) uncertainty about the exact status of the progress made in involving women in LA21 as the majority of local strategies were not yet published; (3) recognition of the difficulties of making joint evaluations of national and local Agenda 21 consultations and partnerships in the absence of effective and representative structures for achieving this.

ISSUES RAISED BY THE NETWORK

Participation

In interviews, informants were asked the following questions: What has been learnt from your participation in local Agenda 21 consultations? What was learnt from this, especially in relation to the need for, and/or limitations to representation of women as

a group in LA21? What policy initiatives might be necessary to ensure greater participation by women in the implementation and evaluation of Agenda 21?

Participation in planning and evaluation

Responses from informants showed that where LA21 exercises had sought representation from women's groups, their status in the planning and evaluation of local strategies was not always made clear. Some LA21 exercises brought women and their representatives into consultations, but there was no guarantee that their views would be taken on board when it came to planning, publishing and implementing local strategies.

Consultation with women's groups on LA21 strategy, and on evaluation of related public policy, was seen as both necessary and as potentially highly problematic unless "checks and balances" were put in place. A Women's Officer working for a local authority said: "Consultation is an important plank of equalities work. But we can get trapped in this... Consultation is highly manipulable,... and it needs checks and balances". An advisor who encountered women's views about their socially and economically disadvantaged positions in society, and who worked for a Women's Centre, and carried those views through to a women's forum within a LA21 consultation, said that women (and men) become "...sceptical, ... if they can see no firm results from consultation... showing that their views were utilised".

Governmental attitudes and structures and social culture to support women's participation in consultations were considered crucial. Whilst Agenda 21 expressed the necessity of including women's views in strategies and in public policy impact analysis and evaluation, (UN, 1992, p29 and p 220), the understanding of how to go about this was not yet in place. One view shared by a number of informants was that LA21 processes should include women as advisers, as users of services, and as knowledgeable about their local environments and planning issues. Experts in feminist issues, across the social, economic and environmental disciplines, should be included in the processes. In addition, they should include representatives of local or national

women's groups and from disadvantaged groups where women were likely to be a majority. A further crucial test of government support could be based on the extent to which financial and other support was made available to draw in "hard to reach" groups to participatory and representative consultations. Possible avenues open to government included funding participation and taking consultation to groups rather than expecting them to respond to "open" meetings.

Where local authorities employed women's officers to help to nurture the understanding of issues that could form a basis for evaluation, it was felt that a culture of bringing expertise together with experience could be fostered. A women's officer said "... That's why it is important to have a Women's Unit, with expert knowledge in it and feeding into it, and consultation to get at the views of disadvantaged women in particular. One can see ways of bringing informed perspectives together to improve understanding and service delivery." A participant in an LA21 consultation, who was also a consultant on women and on environmental policies said, "Environmental Officers tend to know very little about women or women's issues. One way of moving the LA21 process on might be to ensure that, as part of a national strategy, all local government officers had access to training courses on gender issues relevant to their field of expertise or service delivery. ... as "educating the educators" would prove to be absolutely necessary if, and as the objectives of LA21 ([especially chapters on poverty and the empowerment of women] were taken seriously...."

One Officer said that she had been satisfied with consultations in which women and men turned up in roughly equal numbers. She said that this had been the case although those women who came were overwhelmingly "middle-class", and this was a limiting factor. A further limitation of this approach was that the women referred to were not brought into the consultations to give their views as women – rather they joined in discussions and debates about issues such as transport, housing, energy conservation and the like.

In contrast, another Officer told of the considerable and careful planning that had gone into attracting input from women's representatives in the (socially and economically deprived) borough that she worked for. The numbers of participants in "women only" consultations had been high and the quality of their input (to the scrutiny of the first draft of a strategy put together by seven other working groups⁵⁶), had been valuable. In this example it was seen that after one follow-up meeting most women did not continue to make input to ongoing working group activities. Other working groups (having a number of male participants), met several times over a period of months. The Officer interviewed identified "time" as preventing greater input from women who, already over-stretched in their working and private lives could not manage more. She also felt that because their input was brief their views tended to become obscured in generalised recommendations, or left out. This indicated that the inclusion of their views would have had to be argued for at all stages of the consultative process informing the local strategy.

Targeting women to participate

Informants emphasised that women were an important sub-group among those who experience exclusion due to lack of time, income or other resources. Women's groups worked on tight budgets and those in groups often excluded from participatory consultations needed funding, specifically to participate in LA21 if their numbers were to be increased. Informants knew that it was difficult for local authorities, in their role as facilitators of LA21, to play the role of "empowering" women to participate in LA21. If the expectations of women were to have been raised in relation to the implementation of Agenda 21 locally, there would have been a conflict with the approach taken by central government to it (DOE, 1994).

However, most informants believed that the participation of women, including those who were socially or economically marginalised from Agenda 21 consultations, was possible. It was recognised and acknowledged that participation, consultation and

⁵⁶ The other working groups were issue based: energy efficiency; transport; poverty and economic development; nature conservation; built environment; health. Also a steering group.

representation were inter-linked and informants tended to believe that targeted strategies would best ensure that women's voices were heard, and recorded in the Agenda 21 process, locally and nationally.

The issue of how to adequately consult with representatives of women and groups where women form a significant majority or sub-group was raised. It was thought that women in groups such as tenants associations, and "user" groups such as those associated with community care ought to be represented in LA21 strategies.

An informant who had considerable experience of networks, and who was a consultant to local government on environmental issues (5) pointed out that "although existing networks, including consultative forums on relevant issues, were being used to varying degrees...[by officers responsible for facilitating LA21], ... the issue of strengthening these to enable them to participate over an extended period, through partnerships or in other ways, had not been adequately considered, primarily because it would need serious funding...". She went on to say that in her work as an advisor on LA21 to a large number of authorities, only two had attempted to involve and represent women as a group. Many LA21 processes publicised themselves as "partnerships" between the local authority and local people, and yet there were few "partnerships" that were set up as a direct result of LA21, and none that she knew of that had considered the role of government in funding consultative fora on LA21 as a whole. The question of representation was therefore put to one side.

All Officers said that if the resources had been available, they would ideally have liked to have linked representatives of relevant groups through seminars and conferences. However representation of groups such as women (especially where consultations were extended over a period of weeks or months) was generally seen as an unaffordable item.

The call in Agenda 21 for women to be considered as a major group, whose views were crucial to the development of strategies and public policy evaluation, struck a

chord with informants. A consensus view that came from all quarters was that although it was difficult to achieve women's representation as a group, it was vital to demonstrate and act on two insights. First they were not a homogeneous group but nevertheless shared experiences and risks. Second they were a distinctive sub-group among disadvantaged groups such as single parents, disabled people, ethnic minorities, employees. Some felt that women could be represented adequately if resources for outreach by local authority officers and funding for women's organisations were available. Others were less optimistic, although they agreed that this could help.

Shared experiences included those of childbirth and care. Shared risks related to health and poverty. It was well recognised that women were statistically more likely than men to have part time jobs, receive lower pay and be less well off than comparable men as pensioners. Some informants represented women who wanted flexibility and choice in matters of balancing paid and unpaid work, especially single parents, low paid and part time employees. They saw that choices were not always taken freely, but rather they were shaped by public policy. They saw their roles as carers as valuable and as vitally important to be acknowledged as such in government policies that would guarantee their financial security in old age, sickness and periods of unemployment. Aspirations to share more equally with men opportunities in both paid employment and in child-rearing and family management were also common in the responses of most who were interviewed, although it was accepted that this was not necessarily every woman's wish.

An issue that some informants wanted government to experiment with was the evaluation of public policies so as to show impact on particular groups, and so as to show impact on women. Communication between the Census 2001 Campaign, (which also participated in the Women's Budget Group), and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) had revealed that "gender impact" analysis was being experimented with by the Department of Employment. This was welcomed by informants but it fell short of their desire for there to be experimentation with "qualitative feed-back" (along the

lines put forward by Henderson and discussed in chapter three) to show how a range of public policies impacted on women who were not in paid work. Ways in which this could be done were to be experimented with. This illustrated the issue that women were not a homogeneous group. As a Women's Officer working for a Local Authority put it, "women are a majority of minorities". As such, their views and aspirations were both a challenge, and crucial, to the achievement of public policy impact analyses. Among those "minorities" of often socially and economically disadvantaged women who were represented in the project were homeworkers, domestic workers, pensioners, and single parents.

I conclude this section by posing the question: What had been learnt from informant's participation in LA21 processes? and offering an answer to it. There was a need for structures and processes to encourage participation in LA21 by women, especially those among under-represented groups. This was not sufficiently realised or acted on by governmental facilitators of Agenda 21 locally or nationally. Encouragement and support could come from the following sources: funding of under-represented groups; outreach work by local authority officers; use of Women's Officers and others having specialist knowledge of women's experiences. Among the key limitations to participation in LA21 was that even where women were brought in, specifically to give "women's views" across a range of policy issues there was doubt about how far these would be taken on board in the local strategies they were meant to inform.

There was little said by informants about the specific mechanisms that they would like to see put in place to secure representation and accountability. This was probably due to the fact that their emphasis was on experimentation and the need to "break new ground" cautiously, for example, as was the case in relation to the gendered evaluation of public policies. However, echoes of Hirst's (1994) point were evident, namely that there needed to be an adequate flow of information from governed to governors, for a new form of democratic participation to occur and that representative structures should ideally be put in place to facilitate both Agenda 21 and ongoing policy development and evaluation.

Social and economic disadvantage

Key barriers to sustainable development were related to lack of adequate progress towards social, economic and environmental justice as well as to inadequate support for women's groups to participate in LA21 processes as discussed above. The subject of alleviating and eradicating social and economic disadvantage among women was reflected in the projects and campaigns represented by the participants. So too were links between environmental pollutants and the evidence that existed of potential health risks from them to women.

In interviews, the following questions were asked. "If you or your organisation advocates public policy reform to further the aims of sustainable development, say how reform could contribute to enabling women to make input to the sustainable development agenda?" "What kinds of governmental support do you perceive as necessary to attaining the goals of sustainable development for women?"

A sentiment repeatedly articulated by informants was that whilst leading researchers had documented the disproportionate social and economic disadvantage experienced by women in the UK, (Millar, 1992; Millar, 1996; Millar and Glendinning, 1992; Oppenheim, 1993), there was a history of the lack of political will to support change.

The absence of adequate measures of progress

According to informants from groups such as the Beijing Action Group, CHANGE, the Women's Budget Group, Census 2001, and Wages for Housework, one of the key barriers to sustainable development was that without adequate information available about women's experience, and about how policies impacted on them, there was no agreed starting point from which to measure progress. An informant from the Census 2001 campaign said: "one of the things we must get more success with is to shape the outcome of the call made for gender impact analysis. ... Our correspondence with the Office on National Statistics ... shows that it is only the Department of Employment that has so far attempted to engage with this and their policies do not cover unpaid

labour. Paid labour is treated as if it had no impact on unpaid, or low paid labour”.

Another, from the Women’s Budget Group said: “a statement should be included in all parliamentary bills, especially the budget, that would show the likely effect of the proposal on different groups of women, and especially those known to be living below the poverty line”. Another informant from the same group drew attention to their call for government to commission gender-based research to include the following “breakdown by sex to be standard in all social statistics; individual rather than household based measures of poverty; value of time spent in domestic work to be included; gender based analyses to be related to other social divisions such as race, disability, age.” (citing Millar, 1996, and CHANGE 1996).

It was argued that, for progress to be evaluated towards sustainable development, suitable indicators by which to measure women’s progress were needed. A number of informants lobbied nationally and locally for the development of indicators and policies that would value unpaid work. An informant from one campaign group said “unpaid work must be counted as valuable work. At present, it is not valued in the “official” economy, nor does it show up in widely used statistics such as GNP. That has a lifelong effect on women and it impacts not only on their quality of life where they are homemakers and carers, but right into old age, when pension entitlement does not adequately reflect the valuable work carried out...” . The Campaign lobbied the Office of National Statistics, (ONS). It suggested that some of the baseline information needed could be had if questions such as those asked in countries such as Canada were included in the census. For example, the Canadian census asked “How many hours did you spend last week looking after the home, ... the children, ... and caring for others without pay?” (cited in UNED-UK, 1997a, p10).

The ONS had, as a result of a government request, (and as called for in Agenda 21) begun to experiment with ways of measuring the costs of environmental damage, and the benefits of new environmental technologies in a “satellite account”⁵⁷. Informants

⁵⁷ This is the term used to describe a parallel set of accounts to those that are drawn upon to measure GNP, and with which they can be compared as an alternative measure of wealth and progress.

involved in the Census 2001 Campaign argued: “Why not then a satellite account to measure household contributions to the economy?” (UNED-UK 1997a, p10).

Key to public policy reform advocated by informants was to establish baseline measures, or indicators of progress. However, they were not of the opinion that existing “official” data provided adequate baseline information from which to begin. Informants from the Women’s Budget Group, a Women’s Organisation, and the Census 2001 Campaign advocated that women’s representatives from the non-governmental sector should monitor and evaluate all public policies and that policy impact statements should be made each time a Budget was set by the Treasury. Where government support for such a move could be discerned was in relation to the Department of Employment in its work monitoring employment trends in relation to women as well as to men. What informants wanted was for similar work to be carried out by all major government departments.

Work

The argument that there remained substantial inequality at work and at home in pay and status between women and men, was linked to the argument that more support for changed working practices from government could do much to improve the situation. For example government could require employers to: (1) help women to move out of low status occupations, by offering to support career development, for instance further training or education; (2) review jobs regularly (as content changes) in the light of current equal pay and sex discrimination legislation (Equal Pay Act 1975 and Sex Discrimination Act 1985); (3) monitor to achieve better pay for women. Other possible measures that could improve the situation included the provision of social security benefits to top-up income from employment (during school holidays for instance), and financing extra child-care facilities. These were seen as crucial factors to enable women and men to play more equal roles at home and at work. In turn, it was argued that greater social and economic equality would enable women’s effectiveness in influencing participatory Agenda 21 consultative and partnership processes. The lack of political will to take positive action to help women achieve

these aims, displayed between 1992 and 1997, was considered to be partly due to the ideological position of the then Conservative government, and partly to the power of businesses in shaping the global economy.

A local authority officer who had been a key player in organising the LA21 process in her local area, and in involving women's groups in it said: "I think we are making progress on sustainable development but there's a way to go. Low pay, long working hours, these are two major issues. Unemployment is a third and there is a growth in the practice of insecure working conditions... These are key to understanding the way the economy shapes experiences, and opportunities for women to play an active part in civil society as well as the enjoyment of home life. These are key to understanding the disadvantages experienced by women in the borough, and nationally". All informants were agreed that it is women that are doubly disadvantaged, carrying out most of the work in the home, receiving lower wages, and working in insecure employment. The same officer said: "if we are serious about empowering women to participate to a greater extent in processes such as consultations then these structural constraints have to be modified...". These were seen as important points of reference for her in understanding the current limitations both on "empowerment" initiatives that local authority facilitators could take in relation to LA21, and on the realisation of sustainable development generally.

Those who worked with groups representing home-workers and with domestic workers (National Group on Homeworkers, Oxfam UK Poverty Programme, National Board of Catholic Women), gave accounts of the lives of their constituents that were antithetical to socially, economically and environmentally just development. Recommendations made by the National Group on Homeworkers (NGH correspondence, 2/5/97) were that there should be a minimum wage, that this should be set at a realistic level such that recipients could live free of poverty. The recommendation was not taken up by the then Conservative government. Health and safety regulations do not apply to "self-employed" homeworkers. Unscrupulous

contractors took advantage of this and it often led to situations where homeworkers and domestics were exposed to unnecessary and dangerous working conditions⁵⁸.

Public policy reforms argued for by informants in relation to work were intrinsically linked to family life and were needed to lay a basis for participation in LA21 processes. By requiring employers to increase the status and wages of women and to support training and education where this could enhance career prospects it was argued that greater equality between women and men should be enhanced. Governmental initiatives to increase the amount of available child-care and to underwrite a minimum wage were also considered crucial to the task.

Disadvantaged status and the impact of women's campaigns

Potential links between illness caused by environmental pollutants and suffered only or more by women than by men were made by informants during participant observation. Attention was drawn to the lack of political support for the sustainability agenda as it related to the empowerment of women. Lack of political support and the strength of business interests were raised in relation to the relatively low importance attached to recommendations made by women's networks such as WEN, calling for the implementation of effective regulation of those public and private sector organisations which might pollute the environment, and for the cessation of potentially dangerous practices involving the release of environmental pollutants.

Research evidence suggested causal links between the use of products containing chlorine, or dioxins with particular forms of cancer found in women, and with toxic-shock syndrome (WEN, 1991b; 1994; 1995b; 1997). The network had drawn attention to research findings showing that there were significant risks to women from products containing chlorine (such as tampons) and that this was implicated in toxic shock

⁵⁸ A survey of homeworkers (Huws 1994) carried out on behalf of the National Group on Homeworking showed that many of them would prefer to work outside of the home. 76% of the homeworkers surveyed had child-care problems and some earned as little as 30p per hour. The average was £1.20 per hour. Many worked very long hours, had no contracts of employment, or had insecure contracts.

syndrome (WEN, 1991b). They had drawn attention to evidence for the view that dioxins, that can be emitted from solid waste disposal incinerators, had been causally implicated in diagnoses of breast cancer (WEN, 1994; WEN, 1995b, WEN, 1997).

In addition, they had drawn links between pollutants from motorised transport, the inadequacy of public transport and of safe cycling and walking routes, and increases in respiratory disease, especially among children (WEN, 1995a).

Strong local group action by WEN was reflected in their participation in the 'Reclaim the Streets' campaign. In London, weekly cycling conventions were designed to "hold up the traffic" and to draw attention to the need for an integrated transport system, that prioritised anti-pollution measures and though which safer cycling routes would be established (WEN, 1995d).

In addition, WEN promoted what amounted to a sustainable consumption campaign. As consumers and shoppers, they argued, women had considerable power. Their publicity briefings and newsletters encouraged the recycling, re-use and mending of consumer products wherever possible, and the establishment of campaigns designed to establish recycling, and low waste strategies by producers (WEN, 1991a; 1992b; 1996a; 1997). Their services included making information available (through a dedicated telephone advice line, and through publications and briefings) about the environmental credentials of a wide range of shopping items such as DIY products such as wood, paint, flooring, materials used for clothing, feminine and baby hygiene and consumer items, household cleaning materials (Allen and Carless, 1993; Budd, Cox, Lamos, Link, McHarry, Neale, O'Hara and Vallely, 1990; Cox, 1993; Valleley, 1990; Vallely and Aldridge, 1991).

Informants pointed out that environmental issues, like women's issues, were low down the agenda because of the lack of power of women, and of environmental lobbies in

the face of big businesses⁵⁹. An experienced executive of the network said "... business lobbies are very strong... the cost of change to government is potentially great, especially in the short term ... It is no wonder that so little interest is paid to the effects of pollution through a gender lens, when it is not taken seriously at a more general level either". Lack of political support for issues raised in women's campaigns about the potential risks to their health from environmental pollutants was seen as a serious barrier to the achievement of sustainable development and it was felt that it would be "difficult to insert proposals to prevent environmental pollution on these grounds, into local strategies, where the need had not been recognised at a national level or by businesses."

The absence of an effective national anti-poverty strategy

An effective strategy would, in the words of a Director of a women's organisation feature the following elements: "... it would commit government to supporting policy reform to support changes in women's and men's working life. Ideally, access to work, and decent wages, would be available to all who wanted it, probably on the basis of a shorter working week being taken as a new norm. It would ensure all the basic securities necessary to family life, including secure housing, sufficient income to support family life; employment; health care and education."

According to Officers working for local authorities, the quality of housing and the local environment should be taken into account in local anti-poverty strategies and these should be linked to a national strategy. Ill health, particularly stress, was linked to the design of the built environment. The achievement of having 50% of women, reflecting diverse socio-economic groups, in local planning processes was thought necessary to gain relevant information for anti-poverty and LA21 strategies.

⁵⁹ The informant gave this clear indication of how the WEN campaign had identified clear power clashes with business lobbies in relation to WEN raising awareness about how their work linked to the sustainability agenda. The point about disadvantaged status and lack of power could have been demonstrated by other informants, however the example of WEN serves to illustrate the point.

All informants felt that local government could play an important role in re-inventing anti-poverty strategies. Some said that a starting point should be to establish poverty audits. These should systematically examine all aspects of welfare services delivered or enabled by local authorities. These should be carried out in such a way as to include “gender impact” assessments, of existing policies and service delivery and proposed reforms. These should feed into a national exercise designed to stimulate political and parliamentary debate and policy reform. Some local authorities already implemented anti-poverty strategies. These were recognised as useful. However, not all local authorities had them and not all strategies made connections between the quality of the local environment and the kinds of poverty experienced. The health profile of the local population should be taken account of, as should transport availability and habits. Researchers into transport, and those with experience of planning and of women’s networks, advocated this. LA21 groups in Hackney, Camden and Haringey had recommended that these factors be taken account of and monitored as part of local strategies for sustainable development.

In brief, public policy reform thought necessary to achieve effective anti-poverty strategies amounted to a complete review of “welfare” policies. It was suggested that the best way to begin such an exercise would be with local poverty audits, covering a wide range of issues as discussed above. The audit itself should be carried out by participatory means, taking account of “users” views as well as those of professionals working in the many relevant public policy arenas. It was envisaged that local audits should be fed into a national strategy.

The realisation of the recommendations relating to planning and to socio-economic imperatives put forward by informants would require considerable support for a revised notion of citizenship. Whilst the underpinning for this, as described by commentators such as Pateman (1989) and Sassoon (1987) (discussed in chapter three) would be very important to securing this, so too was Mellor’s (1997) insight, namely that it was necessary to change behaviour and expectations such that the quality of life

currently enjoyed in the UK (and in the western world generally) became more egalitarian and less consumer orientated.

CONCLUSION

I said at the outset of this chapter that a picture of the potential strengths of utilising Agenda 21 emerged from my observations and from the interview data, but that so too had a story of barriers to the realisation of it. Networking arenas were opened up by LA21 consultations and by the Round Table. Some of the action resembled that described in the WED literature (Homberg, 1993), in that campaigns were mounted in which women's issues, whilst important, were not necessarily the main focus of attention but rather, were built into wider scenarios in which the importance of planning and community development and environmental concerns were central. However there were limitations to their effectiveness as a tool for pursuing the women's sustainable development agenda. For such networking opportunities to be maximised, organisational structures capable of representing women would have been necessary.

The scale of the potential project, namely the involvement of women's representatives in all LA21 consultations, never got off the ground. It would have taken governmental support to publicise, and to fund and co-ordinate adequately. Instead, it was said that local consultations and processes could be developed to best suit the needs of local people and those local authorities charged with facilitating LA21 were therefore left to act as they felt appropriate. There was no central government (Conservative) support for the women's agenda either (a) as it was laid out in Agenda 21 or (b) in the wider UK women's movement. Although there was greater interest shown by the incoming Labour government, only their first few months of office falls within the scope of the study that informed this chapter.

A potential strength of utilising Agenda 21 was that women's participation in local agenda setting, and evaluation of public policies related to Agenda 21, placed women in a strong position to draw attention to their priorities and to have these taken on

board in local strategies. However, within LA21 consultations, there was ambiguity about the extent to which women's views carried influence, even in those processes and consultations where their views were specifically sought. Consultation could have been used as a progressive vehicle for social, economic and environmental change. However, in relation to women as a distinctive group having diverse views in all three public policy arenas, it clearly was not used progressively. Instead of "empowering" those it was supposed to (women, and disadvantaged groups especially), it could have had the effect of demoralizing them, even where they gave freely of their time and resources to participate.

Agenda 21 provided women's representatives with an opportunity to highlight in what ways they thought women could be considered "a group", and in what ways women formed "distinctive" sub-groups. Informant groups indicated that women shared experiences related to motherhood, caring and employment and that they tended to share risks, especially in relation to poverty. They also indicated that women could not be considered an homogeneous group in all respects but that they were a distinctive sub-group, especially among disadvantaged groups such as single parents, disabled people, ethnic minorities and employees. However, targeting disadvantaged women, especially within disadvantaged groups would be costly. Also bringing in relevant expertise to LA21 processes would require considerable planning and funding, none of which was in place. At the very least, Women's Units, or Officers within local authorities could have acted as a conduit through which women's non-governmental representatives could network.

The aim of Agenda 21 of increasing the representation of women in participatory fora provided a potential opportunity for women to review, and renew, debates about their social and economic circumstances, and what could be done to transform their disadvantaged status. However, the absence of adequate organisational structures or resources necessary to achieve this meant that this did not happen, at least not on a large scale. Informants were clear about some of the specific measures that could be designed to (a) ensure the participation of women's groups and women's

representatives; and (b) help to restructure paid work opportunities and family caring relationships. They were not clear about how, exactly, non-governmental and governmental relationships could be re-structured within sustainable development policy-making arenas.

7. CONCLUSION: WOMEN'S NETWORKS PARTICIPATION IN AND INFLUENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The following discussion takes the form of a critical impact assessment. What was the impact of women's perspectives on the sustainable development agenda during the 1990s? At which points can we see that progress was made and on which specific sustainability issues? Where progress was not made, why not, and what were the absent, yet necessary conditions that could have supported progress?

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES

Women's international networks entered a debate about the nature of sustainable development which was, until the early 1990s, carried out without reference to gender inequality. Chapter four showed how these influenced the emerging agenda of the UN. During the early 1990s they succeeded in placing a number of socio-economic and environmental concerns on the agenda, in the shape and form of securing chapter 24 of Agenda 21. Without their organising and lobbying the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development in 1991 and 1992, there would not have been such a chapter to provide, as it did, a basis for further lobbying and action. Some of the issues put forward in the Women's Action Agenda 21 were lost (for example the call for no less than 40 per cent women in democratic and representative policy making bodies), but that publication, too, can be seen as something of a landmark and one to which women could return as a basis for further networking. Neither document was considered to constitute the "last word" on sustainability issues. The door was open for further networking and for local and national consultations to occur. It was also open for the development of strategies and corresponding policy reform.

The next time we were able to see evidence of the impact of women's perspectives on the sustainability agenda in the UK in the form of a policy document, was in the new national strategy published by the DETR in 1999. This is discussed below.

WHERE DID PROGRESS OCCUR?

The following is a discussion of progress that occurred, such that the agenda articulated in the documents discussed above were advanced, networks were strengthened, and/or policy influenced.

Chapter six showed that the issues put forward earlier in the Women's Action Agenda 21 and in Agenda 21 were taken forward by the UNED-UK Gender-21 network into consultative arenas in the UK. The measurement of "progress" in securing these issues a place in local strategies remained outside of the scope of the study, but as chapter five revealed some 67 local authorities said they had consulted women in their LA21 projects by 1996.

A network was brought into existence, which was able to bring women's perspectives to the attention of others within the sustainable development arena and to that of political decision makers. Their activities and demands can be seen as helping to develop agreements contained in Agenda 21 and to articulate what was seen as necessary to the effective implementation of these in a variety of policy-linked arenas (UNED-UK, 1997a). A "home" for the network was provided by UNED-UK, which had gained a reputation for co-ordinating views from the "sustainability community". UNED-UK played an important role in facilitating the network and in helping to bring their views to the attention of civil servants and politicians. It supported and facilitated women's input to international networking and this was a new departure for it.

Women's organisations and networks, which were not familiar with the sustainability arena, prior to 1992 were brought into it. They joined a number of organisations that had played a part in securing chapter 24 of Agenda 21 and with others (operating in the fields of the environment, overseas development, local planning, local authorities, academia) to formulate common positions on what they wanted from Agenda 21 in the future and in particular from the planning of strategies and their evaluation.

The UNED-UK Women and sustainable development project

In the period 1997-2000, the network that I had studied in 1996-97 became an established project based at UNED-UK and was renamed, the 'Women and sustainable development project'⁶⁰. Its brief involved further networking and awareness raising. The new project had a paid co-ordinator and an advisory group⁶¹. Among the new members and formal observers of the advisory group were representatives of government and the European Commission. It received three years funding from the Environmental Action Fund administered by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and from various non-governmental sources (UNED-UK, 1998a. p.13). This new phase of the project built on the experience of the network to help to plan awareness raising events and to develop strategy. These factors represented significant progress. It was funded, had an institutional home, and governmental support. At least two members of the network moved into related employment working for the civil service. This too can be seen as a gain. However, it raises questions about co-option also.

Solid links were built cross-sectorally and internationally among the Agenda 21 community in the period 1997-2000. This was demonstrated by successfully organised and well attended conferences, seminars and Roundtable consultations. The first of these was a conference entitled Gender and humanity – into the 21st century' (UNED-UK, 1998a). It brought together international and inter-sectoral perspectives on the need for gender issues to become part of the normal frame of reference in all sustainability strategies and related policy design. Joan Ruddock MP, then Minister for Women, spoke about the linkages that she believed would be made between the government's "Welfare to Work" programme and the sustainability agenda as it affected women and men in different ways (op.cit.). Her speech focused on the need for equal opportunities in paid employment and for family friendly working hours and

⁶⁰ All information contained in this section about the UNED-UK Women and sustainable development project is based on my participant observation of its Advisory Group meetings and minutes of these.

⁶¹ Appendix 4 shows the organisations represented by the Advisory Group.

conditions⁶². Representatives of central and local government and of LA21 projects discussed a number of priorities. These included the need to:

1. Recognize the marginalised status of women and to find ways of taking their priorities forward in Agenda 21 strategies;
2. Involve more women as councillors in order to achieve gender perspectives and feminist points of reference in sustainability agendas and strategies;
3. Consult widely with women's representatives and agree a set of indicators of sustainable development capable of differentiating "progress" between women and men⁶³;
4. Secure political support for involving marginalised groups in LA21 processes (op.cit.)

These points continued to be at the centre of concerns and strategies articulated in a number of different influential fora. These included seminars organised or co-organised by UNED-UK, held to raise awareness about the need to involve women's representatives in LA21 processes. Two seminars were organised⁶⁴. Each had speakers and participants from governmental and non-governmental sectors as well as representation from the national LA21 Steering Group⁶⁵.

A training session for those attending the UN Commission on the Status of Women' was held (UNED, 2000)⁶⁶. This was significant not only because it provided training, but because it drew in experienced participants in high level international lobbies with

⁶² This fell short of the call by the 1996-97 Round Table to take account of the need to value women's unpaid work (UNED-UK, 1997a) discussed in chapter six of this thesis. However, it was an improvement on the record of the previous government which had not acknowledged any connection between the status of women and the impact of public policies on their opportunities to work or to participate in public life, and the sustainability agenda.

⁶³ As a follow up to this particular priority see for instance 'Roundtable on gender sensitive indicators', held 25 November 1999. Hosted by UNED-UK for input to the Beijing + Five review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (UN, 1995) (UNED-UK, 2000).

⁶⁴ These were entitled: 'Gender and Equity', 23rd November 1998, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; 'Local Agenda 21 and Gender', Local Government Association, 30 November 1998. (UNED-UK, 2000).

⁶⁵ The role and power of the LA21 Steering Group was discussed in chapter five of this thesis.

⁶⁶ This was held at UNED-UK, 15 February 1999. (UNED-UK, 2000).

a willingness to help to transfer their knowledge to new arenas connected to the sustainability agenda.

In 1999, the project's bid to hold consultative meetings for the purpose of evaluating the progress towards the realisation of section K (on women and the environment) of the Beijing Platform of Action (UN, 1995) was successful. Three Round Table meetings were held⁶⁷ and the results of these were reported to the Women's National Commission, and to the Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office and the DETR. The first Round Table meeting discussed the nature of the report to be made and it was decided that it would be proposed to the UN Beijing Plus Five Review Conference that Section K be renamed 'Women and Sustainable Development'. Participants in it agreed on six distinct areas of concern, that had gender and environmental as well as social and/or economic aspects that should be reviewed, and indicators developed. These were: education; health; marginalised groups; planning, housing and transport; LA21; consumption and waste (UNED-UK, 1999). The second discussed indicators of sustainable development and recommendations were made to the Women's National Commission for input into their report to the government (UNED-UK, 2000). The third discussed women and transport. Professor Hamilton (a participant in the Round Table project and a member of the advisory group) had been commissioned by the DETR as an advisor on this issue and the subsequent report was used for that purpose (op.cit.).

In June 1999 the project co-organised a major workshop on women, health and the environment and involved partners based in Ireland, the Ukraine and Holland. The 'Healthy Planet Forum'⁶⁸ ran as a "parallel event"⁶⁹ to the World Health Organisations 'Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health for Europe – Action in

⁶⁷ These were held in London in September 1999; November 1999 and April 2000 (UNED-UK, 2000).

⁶⁸ The Healthy Planet Forum was held at the Westminster Central Hall, London, 15-18 June 1998. It was coordinated by UNED-UK and supported by the European Commission DGXI and the UK Government.

⁶⁹ It is customary for NGO's to organize events running in parallel with ministerial conferences such as the WHO's Third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health for Europe. The results of these are usually made available to the "official" conference by direct lobbying and by daily newsletters that highlight recommendations made by non-governmental actors.

Partnership'. Its recommendations were received by Michael Meacher MP who was then the Minister for the Environment and by Tessa Jowell MP, who was then the Minister for Public Health (UNED-UK, 2000).

In addition, a project known as 'Roadmap to 2002' began in 1998. It took the form of an interactive web-site. Its value was to help UNED-UK members and international associates to work together in the run up to 2002. Information was given about how to make an input to the 2002 review of the implementation of Agenda 21 (UNED-UK, 1998-99, p.24). An interactive "Stakeholder Toolkit for Women" was developed. This provided access to all the major UN and NGO documents, information for networking and other useful references (op.cit.p25)⁷⁰ on one website. It is to this international arena that we can look once more for signs of progress at least at the level of women developing networks, and developing new methods of communication and evaluation of the sustainability agenda. Roadmap 2002 demonstrated that electronic media such as the inter-net was to be used for information exchange designed to help coordinate the lobbying process and to hold on-line consultative conferences to feed into this. Although this method might not have provided an appropriate structure to include socially disadvantaged groups in the process, it provided a forum for larger, organised and resourced voluntary groups to collectively represent their constituents. Creatively used representation could be engineered that would reflect the different priorities and points of view of women and of men. However, it did not amount to a broad or multi-faceted strategy, capable of achieving the women's agenda.

UNED-UK has remained an influential player among cross-sectoral networks interested in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Agenda 21. There was an interest in the work of the project on women and sustainable development expressed by national government departments, first as funders of the project; second, as participants in the advisory group and third as participants in awareness raising conferences and seminars.

⁷⁰ The web-site was to be found at (www.uned.uk.org/toolkits/women/).

The network could be understood as a social movement network, similar to those discussed by Keck and Sikkink (1998), Castells (1997) and Ruggiero (2000). It could also be seen as a participant in what Evans referred to as “globalisation from below” (2000 p230). Evans pointed out that through transnational networks it had in the past proved possible to challenge national governments by “thinking locally” and “acting globally”. In this way, transnational networks have utilised political leverage, outside of the available opportunities locally and nationally, to bring improvements (op.cit. p231). Chapter six showed how this strategy was successfully played out by the network. What Castells referred to as “resistance” identities were (a) observed in the network and (b) mobilised so as to pave the way for “project identity” to occur. As we saw in chapter three, project identity is said to occur where, in the process of movement, a new meaning relating to a social action is defined. There was progress in terms of networking across sectors (public and private) and issues. Project identity formed around the issues of women, poverty, participation and environment. Under the then Conservative government it appeared that they had failed. Under the Labour government it appeared that a door had been opened.

As Ruggiero observed in his study of the Centri Sociali, in complex social movement networks it is possible to observe all three of Castells’s identities at work. The third identity is characterised by Castells as “legitimising identity” and can be observed where governments co-opt some of the ideas of the movements that have strong project identity. Some of the proposals, inspired by feminism and put forward by the network, were echoed in Agenda 21 and in the UK national strategy published in 1999. Some of the network’s members became civil servants with a policy change platform as part of their employment rationale. The proof of whether this represents a gain, or loss for feminism, shall only become clear in the longer term.

As with feminist movement forebears, the network raised consciousness and developed political lobbying. However, feminism was not always the overt motivating factor. This was at least partly due to the perception that in particular political lobbying circles it was a liability. Some informants past experience of lobbying

indicated that a cautious approach was most effective when presenting feminist issues to senior politicians. What was able to unite NGO's in cross-sectoral networking? Castells's observation that feminist consciousness had reached into the life and agendas of non-feminist networks (1997, p136) can help us to understand how it was possible for this to occur. Braidotti et. al (1994) predicted that this needed to be strengthened in order to progress Agenda 21, and hooks (1984), among others, realised that it was necessary to convince other political actors about the need for political, social and economic reforms based on feminist insights similar to those discussed in chapter three. Insights from these commentators helped one to understand what had happened previously, and what could be possible in the future. Where I think that this study showed that an interesting development had occurred was in the fact that the extended networks, and the agendas being played out here were very like those of WED networks operating in the South (Hombergh, 1993). As Hombergh's review of the WED literature showed, where WED movement in the North had previously been documented, the onus had been on women's consumer power. Possibly for the first time, this study gave us an insight into the day to day workings of a Northern based network, striving to bring local, national and international perspectives and actors together, with a focus on the need for greater participation by women in planning and evaluation of Agenda 21 and related public policy. As we saw, their network brought together perspectives from those acting at the level of the community, local and national government.

The national strategy under the Labour government

The incoming Labour government saw the applicability of the women's agenda to its own policy agenda. There are both strengths and weaknesses to be found in its national strategy (DETR, 1999). It can be understood as a sign of progress, but with particular caveats. Key forms of redistribution discussed in the strategy relate to the need to redress the balance of power between women and men, between the better off and the less well off, and between economic "costs and benefits" and social and environmental ones. It laid out possible ways that the numbers of women in government and in senior positions could be increased (op.cit. p.30). It committed

government to developing economic accounting criteria, to give definitions and attach values to social and environmental capital, as well as economic capital (GNP). Combating poverty and social exclusion is central to the definition of sustainable development advanced in it (op.cit. p. 22-24 and p. 31-49).

Initiatives and actions specifically to increase women's representation in the considerations of policy reform were mentioned in the strategy and this was linked to the work envisaged for the Women's Unit (op.cit. p30). As an indicator of progress, the strategy envisaged increased numbers of women in public appointments and senior positions (ibid). However, there was insufficient information in the strategy as to what, exactly, it was envisaged that the Women's Unit should do to support the sustainability agenda, or if, or how, it was envisaged that they would involve or help to empower disadvantaged groups in the process. The issue of effective and representative structures within a framework of participatory democracy was not tackled in a clearly articulated way. There is nothing in the strategy to indicate that lessons from feminism, or from other studies concerned with socially inclusive representation were to be taken on board. The increases in the representation of women advocated in the strategy fell short of the quotas demanded in the women's agenda (WEDO, 1991) and the links to democratic processes have been lost.

On a slightly more optimistic note, recent research by Childs (2001) showed that increased numbers of female MPs in parliament since 1997 had made an impact in the following ways: by "the articulation of a feminized agenda in parliamentary debates, in select committees and in the Parliamentary Labour Party's women's group. At the constituency level, they consider that it has engendered both women's access, particularly by women's organizations, and the voicing of women's concerns".

It was envisaged that among the headline indicators to be adopted by government and utilised nationally and locally (which were to be refined subsequently⁷¹), (DETR,

⁷¹ Headline indicators were consulted on in 1998 Opportunities for Change (DETR). It was envisaged that under each "headline indicator" a number of sub-sets designed to provide a comprehensive statistical and explanatory source of progress towards sustainable development would be experimented

1999, p13), would be one to indicate the number of “women in public appointments and in senior positions” (op.cit. p30). This can be seen as a welcome, if very small step.

There was mention in the strategy of guidelines for public policy appraisal and impact analysis issued by the Home Office, DFEE and the Cabinet Office in 1998 (op.cit. p25). It was stated that there were appraisal systems that looked at various policy issues in the areas of the economy, the environment, health and transport to monitor criteria based on equal opportunities guidance. In addition it stated that government was: “... committed to a better understanding of the impacts of policies on different groups in society, particularly women, ... and ensuring that findings are taken into account in policy making.” (ibid.) Although mentioned, this did not occupy prominent space, nor did it give details of how exactly it was envisaged that work carried out under this guidance would dovetail into further development and evaluation of the strategy. Whilst mention was made of the need to further develop head-line indicators and that this would arise from experimentation, there was nothing to indicate how or when this would occur. It was envisaged that headline indicators would “un-pack” to reveal information about multi-faceted issues and contexts and that appropriate quality of life indicators would be developed. However there was no clear indication that the insights of commentators such as Henderson (1994) were to be considered or that recommendations made by those experienced in representing women’s organisations were to be experimented with⁷². As Henderson pointed out, these should be linked to policy impact audits, and to the re-organisation of national and local accounting, draw on qualitative information from socially inclusive fora, including women, and be based on a more egalitarian model of the economy than that of economic growth on its own (ibid).

with. The national UK Round Table on Sustainable development welcomed progress made as of May 2000, especially of the indicator known as “quality of life counts” which indicates measures of poverty and social exclusion. However, gender differentiated information is not comprehensively given.

⁷² However, one would not expect to see evidence of this in the strategy. Rather one would expect to see evidence of it in action. The DETR and the Women’s Unit expressed interest in the findings of the

The women's agenda?

The government's 1999 strategy overlapped with the women's agenda, as defined in the study (chapters four and six) but fell short of it on the following accounts. The "New Deal" was put forward as central to the strategy, with its pledge to increase the number of nursery places, to improve maternity and paternity leave and the introduction of the working families tax credit. In it, low wages and long working hours were rejected and it was specifically pointed out that these were unacceptably high and could not provide a sustainable basis for the economy or family life. (DETR, 1999, p36-38). However, it failed to specify exactly what would be considered acceptable by government, or to give a time-scale by which clear goals could be expected to have been reached.

Optimistically read, the strategy offered increased opportunities to women who wished to work in paid employment, and as laying a basis for greater sharing of gender roles within the family. However, the reality that the minimum wage, whilst probably benefiting more women than men fell short of the rate which was to be set at "50 per cent of men's median earnings which had been the Labour Party's original position" (Toynbee and Walker, 2001, p119). The development of child-care arrangements has been uneven (Rake, 2000). In addition, although the government signed the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, and implemented the European Working Time directive, it was the only European country "to press for[and use]... a clause allowing workers to 'volunteer' to work more than the[maximum] forty eight hours" (Toynbee and Walker, 2001, p113).

The New Deal may go some way to re-structuring the world of work and home life and the welfare state social contract, but these measures do not signal the end of the "male model" of work. Rather they may have the effect of coercing some women to participate in it. The "equal-shares" model holds that caring work is as valuable as paid work and that it ought to be rewarded as such. In it funding child-care and

UNED-UK's Women's Round Table on Indicators the report of which gave views taken from different sectors as to priorities (UNED-UK, 2000).

supporting a shorter working week for everyone would be made possible, and the state is seen as playing a crucial role in bringing this about, both as an employer, policy maker, and as an advocate, especially in encouraging employers to support it (Sassoon, 1987; MacGregor, 1999; Coote and Campbell, 1987).

Although Toynbee and Walker claim that “women benefited most from Labour reforms because many more women are poor” and that reforms such as “...minimum wage, part-time workers’ rights, the working families tax-credit, targeting the poorest pensioners [...] all had a disproportionately good effect on women” (2001, p29) there were serious qualifications to it. For example, “basic inequalities remained” (op.cit. p30) with gaps between average female and male pay rates remaining wide. Crucially, it has been argued that the “imbalance between work and domestic life probably got worse” (op.cit. p114), with no clear right to reduce full-time work to part-time or flexitime (for parents), and without, as yet, enough affordable child-care.

Consultations are put forward in the strategy as one way that the power of “the public” would be increased. The consultations put forward in it as central to the strategy and as facilitating “increase(d) public participation in local democracy” (DETR, 1999, p69) were: (1) Local Agenda 21; (2) the “modernisation agenda” for local government; (3) policy initiatives associated with development plans; (4) regeneration and social exclusion programmes; (5) local planning exercises. However, all this will fall very short of the mark if stakeholder, or, in the terminology of Agenda 21 “major group” representation is not specifically engineered. As has been indicated above, targeting and supporting women, and in particular disadvantaged women and groups, will be crucial to the successful implementation of LA21 and future evaluations of the sustainability agenda. By implication, this point holds for all other consultations mentioned in the national strategy that should be designed to facilitate increased public participation in democracy.

Traditionally, the philosophy informing the Labour Party rests on notions of social equality that is consciously planned with long-term goals in mind. The 1999 strategy

and the development of indicators for sustainable development demonstrated that a long-term approach would be taken. There was some evidence that the women's agenda was seen as important to the national strategy. However the strategy was very limited in what it promised to act on. Building on the new clause 4 of its constitution, the voluntary sector was named as important to the Party's strategy and wider social contract (Labour Party 1996). Much was made of the need to support voluntary sector organisations that campaign on behalf of their constituents. In practice the term of government office begun in 1997 indicated some commitment to moving progressive agendas forward. However, the ideas and practices associated with managerialism begun under the Conservative administrations of the 1980s have continued.

Managerialist methods of enabling participation in consultation as to, for instance, the delivery and development of services to meet the needs of different groups in society are not designed to ensure that all groups, everywhere, have equal access to decision making structures or to material resources. It is these that would need to be radically revised, to reflect the values of participatory, and in my view associative democracy, for the sustainability agenda to be carried forward effectively.

Some good progress was made between 1997 and 2000 as was indicated in the discussion of the Women and sustainable development project above. Some significant aspects of the women's agenda can be seen in the 1999 strategy but in an under-developed way. This raises the question of the extent to which feminist ideas are co-opted, and how far accommodated. Can this be seen as a small but significant gain, or is it a warning-sign that the women's agenda, particularly in relation to participatory and redistributive issues, must be staked out with more clarity? Whilst there are no clear answers to these – the questions remain pertinent.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR FURTHER PROGRESS

The political, social and economic context influenced the implementation of Agenda 21. As we saw, attempts to bring women's perspectives to bear on governmental strategies were differently viewed by the Labour government than the previous Conservative one. The full potential of women's networks, and the implementation of

Agenda 21 was not realised. Chapter five showed the gap between the ambitions set out on the world stage and the small steps that could be taken, and difficulties faced at the local level. In this “gap” remained contesting claims and counter-claims. Institutional resources were inadequate to fulfilling agreements reached under Agenda 21.

Despite progress discussed above a number of challenges to the implementation of Agenda 21 remained. Of importance for this thesis are those arising from the political culture providing the structure within which LA21 worked. Some of the commentaries on LA21 reviewed in chapter five, highlighted that lack of democratic accountability was linked to the dramatic reorganisation in local government that began in the 1980s. This involved reduced powers and resources; the increasing use of unaccountable and ad-hoc frameworks of service delivery; short term policy focus; and privatisation of service delivery (Patterson and Theobald, 1995; Agyman and Evans, 1995; Patton and Worthington, 1996; Voisey et al 1996; Freeman, Littlewood and Whitney, 1996; Machnagthen and Jacobs, 1997; Tuxworth, 1996; Littlewood and While, 1997).

In chapter five an assessment of the LA21 process in the UK, 1993-97, focussing especially on the nature of local consultations, and related public policy making processes at the level of local government was made. It was found that available evidence was inconclusive but suggested that many informed women’s organisations had participated in a number of LA21 processes. It was found that LA21 had not been used as a vehicle for social inclusion, and that this must be seen as a missed opportunity. It was argued that the key, and crucial reason why LA21 was not used, as a vehicle for social inclusion was that there was no support for this from national government. In the period prior to 1997, central government failed to act on chapter 24 of Agenda 21. It failed to publicly address the question of the effectiveness of anti-poverty measures as called for in chapter 3 of Agenda 21 and as necessary to ensure sustainable development (DOE, 1994).

Without national support, the action that could be taken by local authorities was limited. However, LA21 was taken up by approximately two-thirds of local authorities (Tuxworth and Carpenter, 1995). It was argued that, it was the non-statutory status of LA21 that allowed those who wished to use it an opportunity to challenge the increasingly centralised style of governance. Through it, some may have discerned opportunities for helping to build alliances and to challenge the centralisation of power, and the weakening of local democracy that had been the hallmark of the 1980s. However, even where this may have been so, the influence of women's networks was not evident.

I argued that the nature of what amounted to an awareness raising campaign on the part of the LA21 Steering Group almost undoubtedly accounted for the ways and means by which LA21 was taken forward by local authorities. In particular, the nature of the questions asked in regular surveys carried out on their behalf would have acted as "sign-posts" to local authority officers about how to progress LA21 processes involving consultation and local service delivery and evaluation. They would have helped local authorities to structure the access points at which those being consulted could make effective contributions to local strategies. The surveys could be seen as helpful to those who were charged with the facilitation of LA21 and who were not necessarily well informed about Agenda 21. However, they could also have set limits to activities. Wittingly, or unwittingly what Fairclough (1989) referred to as "back grounding" of women's agency occurred. It was argued that in failing to ask the crucial question "Is your Local Agenda 21 campaign involving ... [women; ...]?" earlier (than November 1996), awareness was not raised among those who may have acted differently, had it been asked at the outset, and regularly, as was the case with most of the others posed (LGMB, 1997a).

It was seen that a number of methods of consultation had been used by local authorities, but lessons that could have been learnt from well known studies such as the one conducted by Skeffington (DoE, 1969), discussed in chapter three, had not been taken on board. Nor had insights from feminism, concerning women's

participation in consultative and planning arenas (e.g. Greed, 1994; May, 1997) also discussed in chapter three.

It was argued that despite government advocacy of a partnership approach to LA21 (DoE, 1994 p206) the term was used in a managerialist sense, and not to indicate that partnerships involving players with equal power would be nurtured. As Morphet and Hams (1994) had observed, the model of LA21 envisaged in Agenda 21, could be described as a partnership approach. Their account of the potential for LA21 was positive. They envisaged that it might go some way to helping invigorate equitable community action to build a “consensus” on sustainability issues. And yet, partnerships are not necessarily benign. Government had welcomed the approach increasingly through the 1990s. One point of partnership approaches to LA21 could have been to empower weaker players to enable them to play their part with the necessary resources to their credit. Part of the attraction of such an approach was that private funds would be mobilised as would voluntary action, and both were seen as central to government’s vision of a “green” future (DoE, 1994, p204-6). It was central to their vision of governance more generally (Cutler and Waine, 1997; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Jewson and MacGregor, 1997). Partnerships committed interest groups to taking some responsibility for service delivery and therefore for its accountability and effectiveness. The “contracting out” culture was predicated upon this. However, this was understood to have undermined local democracy (ibid.) In addition, many local authorities welcomed broadening the basis for local partnerships because they had, in previous years, been dominated by coalitions either of trade unions and the Labour Party, or of business and the Conservative Party (Moore, 1997, p168).

Recent literature from political sociology provides insights that are necessary to understanding the political context into which LA21 was to fit. Commenting on city governance, contributors to Jewson and MacGregor eds. (1997) observed that partnership approaches were capable of delivering the agendas of disparate groups on all sides of the political spectrum. However, “crucial questions... [that ought to be

asked are] ...: which interests and which players will be included in partnerships, and which will be left outside? Who will be the leaders within partnerships? Whose agendas will prevail?"(Jewson and MacGregor, 1997, p9). These questions are implicit in many LA21 commentaries, discussed in chapter five, but not nearly as clearly put as one might have expected. However, the informants in the research project, discussed in chapter six, posed these questions. Absent, yet necessary conditions for progress to occur included that women's organisations needed to have access to the necessary power to enable their participation in partnership approaches that emphasised equality of power in Agenda 21 arenas. Public policies predating 1992 continued to set the political scene nationally. In the UK, it was clear that women who wished to expedite policy change such that issues outlined in chapter 24 of Agenda 21 could be implemented, would have to work hard to convince government to act. It was clear to those whose views were documented above that these were a necessary and crucial part of the agenda, and that they called for much greater involvement of women in shaping and evaluating policy reform.

There are considerable difficulties involved in uniting disparate social and political actors, especially in programmes designed to empower the poor and excluded to "speak for themselves". Unequal power between "partners" can lead to conflict over priorities and/or over the orientation of the agenda to be pursued with the wishes of those with less power remaining in a subordinate position (Lees and Smith, 1975; Room, 1993). Even where direct representation of relevant groups is achieved at the local level, this can be undermined because of "lack of direct representation to [the sponsoring department of central government and which retains overriding power]" (Moore, 1997, p.175). Informants to the research project who had participated in, and who had some responsibility for organising LA21 consultations reflected these sentiments. It was clear from evidence presented in chapter six that informants felt that power relationships within LA21 consultative frameworks were, at a formal level

“opaque” and that major group input to these was insufficient. On a more optimistic note, there could be dividends where partnerships work well⁷³.

Of particular relevance is the fact that there was what could be described as a chasm between the views about the nature, extent and impact of poverty and social exclusion in the UK between commentators on the right (Murray, 1990; 1994) and on the left (Jewson and MacGregor; 1997; Geddes, 1997). Among the views explored in the literature reviewed in chapter five was the concern that socio-economic factors, and especially the inclusion of marginalised groups were not sufficiently in evidence in LA21 processes to meet the requirements of either Agenda 21 or participatory democracy (Agyeman and Evans, 1995).

Informant’s views on poverty and on the consequences of the disadvantaged status of women had far more in common with those on the left of the political spectrum. In 1996-1997, they attempted to influence the agenda during a period of Conservative government that was very right wing. They argued that political, social and economic organisation could be engineered to facilitate greater equality of access to material resources that were necessary to participation in sustainable development. The network challenged the tenets of the “liberal settlement” (Pateman, 1989) pointing out that affirmative action was necessary and should be supported by government in order to support participatory consultations that were socially inclusive.

There remains, in my view, the need to provide support for citizenship and for a new definition of citizenship to prevail. Pateman and Sassoon, among others, argued that the basis for women’s rights attached to full and part-time work and to caring work that is unpaid must be challenged. In turn, a new definition of full employment is required. A guaranteed income could go some way to supporting citizenship and to meeting the needs associated with participation in civic life. These views are significant because what

⁷³ For example Moore noted the success of the Welfare Rights Project that promoted the take up of benefits in Liverpool as part of the European Union’s Third Poverty Programme. He found evidence that regeneration projects took local opinion that would not otherwise have had a platform on board as a result of the same programme.

emerged from the study is that whilst these issues are recognised by sociologists and by actors at the international level, they appeared to have become very marginalised in the LA21 process. In addition the study indicated that quality of life issues, similar to those put forward by Mellor (1997), should be further linked to concepts of citizenship if sustainable development is to be progressed. Outside of the scope of this study, but nevertheless vitally important to resolving these issues, is the issue of international solidarity. If international networking among women, and more generally among non-governmental organisations were better developed and supported progress could occur.

Notions of accountability and democracy can be legitimised, building support from the local to national levels of government. Evidence presented in chapters five and six suggested that local democracy needed to be revived, and reformed. For example, in chapter six it was demonstrated that women's organisations pointed to the need to improve the power and accountability of local authorities in order to bring women's perspectives to local consultative arenas. They argued that crucial elements of such an improvement would include mechanisms for greater accountability. For example, the point was strongly made that even where women and their representatives were involved in consultations as to the implementation of Agenda 21 their status was not made clear, and there was no guarantee that their views would be taken on board. In short, consultations could be used as a vehicle for genuine dialogue and representation of ideas at the level of politics and policy implementation, but they could just as easily be cast aside (as was found by Barnes in her research into user-involvement published in 1997 and discussed in chapter two).

Although greater accountability was desired by network actors it was also realised that the understanding of how to go about this was not yet in place. It was suggested by informants to the study that women's groups needed to be targeted and adequately funded, in order to facilitate their participation in consultations, and that this was especially necessary to bring the views of the most disadvantaged, and cash-strapped women's groups to appropriate arenas. In 1996, a number of organisations were unaware of LA21 and the potential that existed for them to influence the sustainability

agenda. This was demonstrated by informants to the project whose experience was that they had not been as well informed as they should have been about Agenda 21 early enough for them and their organisations to have adequate preparation time to fully utilise what opportunities were available to influence its implementation. Their access to policy-making communities could have been both restricted due to lack of resources, and belated because they were not well informed at an early stage in the LA21 consultative period. Agenda 21 provided an opportunity to open up space for putting a large number of issues from disparate women's agendas together. However evidence from this study indicates that there were problems associated with this and it is argued that there is a need for new forms of representation and accountability to facilitate participation. In this sense, again the picture is similar to that emerging from research about "user-involvement". On the one hand, space had been opened up for actors from disadvantaged groups to influence political agendas. On the other, disadvantaged groups are usually under-resourced and in the case of Agenda 21 they were under informed. Additionally they were brought into arenas where there are no clear rules of representation and accountability.

A further important point was that women needed to be represented, but not as a homogeneous group. Despite shared experiences and risks (child birth and care, health risks, and vulnerability to poverty), greater focus on policy impact analysis, involving feedback from women on public services could provide valuable insights and aid the processes on social inclusion and accountability. This has not happened. Whilst indicators of sustainable development (DETR, 1998), remain experimental, they do not, at present, include any gender impact analysis.

As a small group of experts, informants knew that they had the potential power to lobby successfully. Local authority officers played an important part in the network, but there were too few of them to have made a large impact on the methods of consultation used by all local authorities. They would have liked to participate in a larger structure, capable of representing larger numbers of women. Such structures, however, are not put in place overnight, or without considerable political support. As I

mentioned above, UNED-UK had given the network its home in 1996, and this was a sign of progress. Its power lay in its good reputation as an effective coordinator of NGO lobbies in international arenas associated with the United Nations. However, there were limitations to its power. Just one year, 1996-97, was in my view insufficient time to coordinate the best possible lobby from a network, the members of which were still making sense of what was happening on the ground in relation to Agenda 21. In addition, the vehicle of the Round Table consultation is inadequate to the task of fully socially inclusive representation. UNED-UK had the potential to act as an effective mentor, but this was not fully realised. Having built up its reputation on environmental and development issues related to international policy – it lacked the essential political intelligence in the sphere of national social and economic policy. In addition, funding and human resources of UNED-UK were not large. There was, ultimately, a failure to keep the momentum going, especially by 2000 when the extent of coordinated activity moved to being internet based. Once the initial funding of the Women and Sustainable Development project had run out it proved impossible to support. As we saw from the discussion of the political mentorship of the National Association of Women's Committees in chapter three (Bryson, 1999; Greed, 1994; Lovenduski and Randall, 1993) sustained political mentorship is an essential prerequisite for gaining long-term support and capacity building. As a result of their waning fortunes and despite their status and experience, actors in the network were not able to continue to sufficiently assert "project-identity" (as conceptualised by Castells, 1997 and discussed in chapter three) to ensure that the goals of the project became central to future reform.

The question of access and power of women is an important one. They form a constituency that is acknowledged as disadvantaged in a number of ways. Models of associative democracy, participatory action research and group representation could have been drawn on to help to redress the imbalances in social and economic terms that serve to disadvantage women, and their organisations in crucial decision making arenas. The models put forward by Hirst (1994) and Achterberg (1996) are interesting but lack the necessary perspective that empowerment of women, in particular, needs

specific engineering. Chambers (1997) and Reason (1994a; 1994b) focus on the potentially empowering nature of participatory action research where it is used to ensure that “hidden voices” are recorded, and feed through to decision making processes aimed at setting policy objectives and evaluations of these. MacGregor (1999), Phillips (1991) and Young (1991) all acknowledge the centrality of empowering women within any model of reform and of the possibility of reviewing and revising models of democracy and group representation. I am arguing here that put together, and seen through the lens of both feminism and sustainable development, these models could provide fruitful ways forward. They could serve as a framework for future evaluations of the development and implementation of Agenda 21. Combined with a new model of citizenship based on a redistribution of power and wealth (discussed in chapter three), this could provide a basis for the implementation of Agenda 21. It could also, in my view, be useful to consider as a structure capable of strengthening methods of user- involvement more generally.

CONCLUSION

The study showed that women’s networks made progress at certain points in terms of influencing the sustainable development agenda. However, progress was slow after 1992. Women could have made more progress had they been better organised and politically supported. They would also have stood a better chance of influencing the agenda had they found more ways and means of building stronger networks, whilst at the same time, paying attention to how these could be linked internationally, nationally and locally. Although this kind of networking can be seen at the level of individual networks after 1992, it was mainly among those that had pre-existing international and local networks in tact before 1992. By 2000 it could be seen that women could make an input to the views informing the international review of Agenda 21’s implementation in 2002 via a consultative website set up for that purpose. This may have broadened access at the international level. However, a caveat, based on the empirical study, is that if, and where groups accept the idea that more consultation amounts to a shift in power in their favour, they misjudge the nature of the power relationships in which they are involved. There has been little progress in

terms of linking women's experience of attempting to influence and evaluate local Agenda 21 strategies and this is an area that could be researched in the future. In addition, government support for strengthening major groups such as women to play a more effective role in developing local and national strategies was shown to be inadequate.

The continuing relevance of this study can be understood on at least three levels. First, Agenda 21 will continue to be reviewed nationally, locally and internationally in future years. The absent, yet necessary, conditions to the success of women's viewpoints making their mark were discussed above. Many of the points raised here are just as relevant to the effective participation of non-governmental organisations whether or not they focus on women's issues. Second, policy making networks could, generally, learn from the above and usefully experiment with affirmative action projects to better represent women's viewpoints in public arenas, especially those relating to the implementation of the user-involvement aspects of social policy reform and relating to local and national planning. Last, but not least, it would appear that women's networks need to organize together to effectively represent their constituents viewpoints in these arenas. More progress could have been made by them had they managed to show that they were consistently and effectively able to do so. Funding agencies could be made more aware that funds are needed for such activities, and missed opportunities, such as those, in part documented here need to be stressed. A criticism of networking that is frequently made is that it amounts to little more than "talking shop". However, observations made during the course of this study do not bear this out. Participants in the network included many who could ill-afford to spend time or use resources without focusing on goals and how to achieve them. A further criticism of networking, coming from funding agencies themselves, is that networks tend to exist in order to lobby, and lobbying tends to have a political edge. Many agencies fund only charities, or academic research based institutions. A challenge therefore is to make a case for women's viewpoints to policy makers across the political spectrum. More resources would need to be utilised in these ways. An insight coming from the study is that networking can be effective, and yet it is not easy to

maintain. It showed that there is scope for more research into how this is carried out, and in particular how local and national groups seek representation for their members and constituents and at the same time how solidarity is built at the international level.

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Appendix 1

Participants in the research project related to the UNED-UK Gender 21 Round Table on women and sustainable development. July 1996-June 1997.

Name	Organisation (and relationship to it)
1. Alexander, Peg	National Group on Home-working (Coordinator) Green Party (Agent)
2. Amiss, Cristel.	Black Women for Wages for Housework Campaign. Manchester Local Agenda 21 (Participant)
3. Ashworth, Georgina.	CHANGE, Director. National Women's Network (Member). Women in Development, Europe (WIDE) (Member). Women's Budget Group (Founder). London School of Economics and Political Science, Gender Institute.
4. Barber, Sue.	Middlesex University, School of Social Science. Gender 21/UNED-UK (Co-coordinator; Participant- observer). Hackney Local Agenda 21 (Participant-observer). National Women's Network (Member). Women in Development, Europe (WIDE) (Member).
5. Brett, Monica.	Environmental Consultant, and LA21 Adviser. World-Wide Fund for Nature. International Foundation for Animal Welfare.
6. Bronstein, Audrey.	Oxfam UK, Head of UK Poverty Programme.
7. Carey, Helen	Women's Institute. Chairman.
8. Carroll, Vicki.	Gender 21 volunteer Project Officer/consultant Women's Environmental Network (Member) Wandsworth Local Agenda 21 (Participant).
9. Cavanagh, Sue.	Women's Design Service. Women's Planning Forum (Member).
10. Chaney, Vera.	Citizens Against Toxics (Member).
11. Chikoti, Pam	Women's Environmental Network (Campaign Officer).

12. Chinkin, Dr. Christine. London School of Economics, International Relations Department.
 13. Christie, Julie. Women's Design Service.
Women's Planning Forum (Member).
 14. Cripps, Diana. Women's Environmental Network. (Director).
 15. Cronin, Andrea. London Ecology Centre.
 16. Dodds, Felix. UNED-UK (Co-ordinator)
International Steering Committee for the UN
Commission on Sustainable Development (Co-ordinator).
International Facilitating Committee for Habitat II (Co-ordinator).
 17. Evans, Sian. Wages for Housework Campaign.
Camden Local Agenda 21 (Participant).
 18. Flenney, Claire. MAMA 86 (UK Project Director).
ANPED (Association of Northern People for
Environment and Development) (Member).
Women's Environmental Network (Member).
Tower Hamlets Local Agenda 21 (Participant).
 19. Hamilton, Prof. Kerry. University of East London. (Head of Transport).
Transport Planning Group. (Member).
London Research Centre.
 20. Jayawickrema, Anoma. Sarjoo (Project Officer, Women and Democracy)
Women's Environmental Network (Sustainable
Production and Consumption project).
 21. Johnson, Kathryn. London Borough of Hackney, (Local Agenda 21
Officer).
 22. Kaiser, Marianne London Ecology Centre.
 23. McKenzie, Caroline UNED-UK (Round Table on Health).
 24. Mawle, Angela. Gender 21/UNED-UK. (Founder & Co-coordinator).
Local Agenda 21 Steering Committee (Member)
Bristol Unitary Authority. (Director, Sustainable Cities
Project).
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| 25. Marsh, Gwen. | Census 2001 Campaign (Member)
Hampstead Labour Party, Women's Section.
Beijing Forum (CHANGE, Fawcett Society, NAWO)
(Member). |
| 26. Neville, Caroline. | Fairshares. |
| 27. Nisancioglu, Dr. Sule. | London Borough of Camden. (Policy Officer, Urban
Regeneration). Previously worked for Haringey on
Gender and Planning issues. MA Thesis, 1990 on
Women and Planning issues. |
| 28. Nugent, Claire. | Gender 21, (Administrative Assistant).
Green-Socialist Network. (Member).
Women's Environmental Network (Member).
Camden Local Agenda 21 (Participant, Women's
Group). |
| 29. Poole, Louisa. | National Board of Catholic Women. (International
Section). |
| 30. Potter, Jennifer. | Methodist Church, International Section (Secretary for
International Affairs). |
| 31. Procter, Andrew. | National Federation of women's Institutes. (Research
Officer). |
| 32. Scadding, Helen. | London Borough of Haringey, Islington Council,
Women's Unit. (Women's Officer). |
| 33. Scott, Marion. | London Borough of Haringey, Islington Council.
Women's Unit. (Women's Officer). |
| 34. Sherman, Adrienne. | International Council of Jewish Women. (Director). |
| 35. Sinclair, Angela | Socialist Environment Resource Association (SERA).
(Volunteers Officer). |
| 36. Tansley, Claire. | Council for Voluntary Service. London Borough of
Hackney. Hackney Local Agenda 21 (Participant). |
| 37. Walters, Cecilia. | Beijing Forum (CHANGE, Fawcett Society, NAWO).
(Member).
Census 2001 Campaign. (Member).
Hampstead Labour Party, Women's Section. |
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Appendix 2

Questionnaire completed by participants in the 'Gender 21, UNED-UK Round Table on women and sustainable development'.

Thank you for expressing your interest in and intention to participate in the Round Table on Women and Sustainable Development. The purpose of the Round Table is to gather perspectives from women and their organisations on the implementation of Agenda 21 in the UK and on their hopes and priorities for progressing sustainable development.

Our aim is to represent key views taken from a cross sectoral sample of organisations (women's organisations; NGOs; local government; academe; trade unions). The information asked for below will give us background information to assess the nature of the organisations represented.

Your views will be monitored by coordinators of the Round Table and it is intended that a report, based on them will be presented to the UK government, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and that it will be disseminated to other interested parties prior to the United Nations Special Session of the General Assembly, called for June 1997, to assess the implementation of Agenda 21 in its first five years.

NAME:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

FAX:

TYPE OF ORGANISATION: (NGO ETC)

CURRENT PROJECTS RELEVANT TO THE ROUND TABLE:

ARE YOU ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ANY OTHER ORGANISATION? IF SO PLEASE
GIVE SAME DETAILS AS ABOVE:

ORGANISATION:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE NUMBER:

FAX:

TYPE OF ORGANISATION: (NGO ETC)

CURRENT PROJECTS RELEVANT TO THE ROUND TABLE:

Appendix 3

Questions asked of informants

Evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 21

1. How, if at all, have you or your organisation, raised awareness about women, sustainable development and Agenda 21?
2. How, if at all, have you or your organisation utilised opportunities afforded by local Agenda 21 consultations?

What was learnt from these in relation to:

- (a) the need for, and/or limitations to representation of women as a group in LA21?
- (b) Outstanding public policy issues identified by women as necessary to achieving sustainable development, and women's participation in Agenda 21 implementation and evaluation?

3. If you or your organisation advocates public policy reform to further the aims of sustainable development, say how it could contribute to enabling equal opportunities for women to make input to the sustainable development agenda?

What kinds of governmental support do you perceive as necessary to attaining the goals of sustainable development for women?

4. Would you say that you or your organisation made use of women's networks in relation to sustainable development and have these been used to raise awareness about *Agenda 21*? How?

Publicising the recommendations of the project

6. In the briefing meetings with governmental spokespeople, how were the [public policy] [LA21 consultations] recommendations of the project received, and what, if anything did MPs, MEPs think they could do to help?

Were any of the project's recommendations acted on, as far as you know?

How?

7. Tell me about your experience of the Women's Caucus in the parallels to the Special Session?

How, if at all, did the agenda pursued as part of the caucus reflect similar recommendations to those made by the project in its report?

How, if at all, did the caucus's agenda depart from that of the project?

(Could get answer to this from documentary analysis).

Appendix 4

Advisory Group to Women and Sustainable Development project (UNED-UK) – as at June 1999.

Ms L Abdela, Chief Executive, Project Parity
Ms S Barber, Middlesex University
Ms F Connelly, National Women's Network
Ms E Daly, European Commission (Observer)
Ms M De Wolf, Federation of Small Businesses
Cllr J Edmond-Smith, Brighton & Hove Council
Ms C Flenley, UNED-UK
Prof K Hamilton, University of East London
Dr M Hemmati, UNED-UK
Ms L Kelly, Action Aid
Ms J Langley, National Federation of Women's Institutes
Cllr G Lockyear, LA21 Steering Group
Ms H Lynne, Women's Environmental Network
Ms A Mawle, Isle of Wight Council
Ms F McConnell, UNED-UK & LA21 Steering Group
Ms S Puri, Advisor to UNFPA
Ms F Reynolds, Women's Unit (Observer)
Ms J Richards, Television Trust for the Environment
Dr C Stephens, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
Ms S Tibballs, The Body Shop International
Ms R Wade, Oxfam Education